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## MASTER THESIS IN HUMAN RIGHTS SPRING 2021

### **Necesitamos vivas a nuestras hijas**

[We need our daughters alive]

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*Tensions to the functioning of the human rights mechanism of AVGM  
- the role of civil society and impact of societal accountability in its activation - in  
the state of Ciudad de México*

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Word Count: 20.023 including references

-Hoy, a las mujeres nos quitan la calma-  
Nos sembraron miedo, nos crecieron alas

[Vivir Quintana- Canción sin Miedo]

[Today, for all women, they have taken our calm]  
[They planted fear, they gave us wings]

## Acknowledgments

The researcher wants to acknowledge the invaluable support and insight given by my interviewees; Iris Rocío Santillan, Andrea Medina Rosas, Patricia Ortega, Aleida Hernández Cervantes, Xipatl Contreras and Marta Torres Falcón. Thanks for sharing your time and being so helpful in terms of explaining and providing me with invaluable information. And furthermore, thanks for the important work you do, for your strength and your courage.

Other special thanks to my fellow classmates Albin Ölveborn, Malin Pettersson och Annie Magnusson, for all of your brilliant critique, ideas, and invaluable support.

I also want to thank my supervisor, Edmé Domínguez.

## Reconocimiento

La investigadora quiere dar sus agradecimientos por el apoyo invaluable y conocimiento provisto por las personas entrevistadas: Iris Rocío Santillan, Andrea Medina Rosas, Patricia Ortega, Aleida Hernández Cervantes, Xipatl Contreras y Marta Torres Falcón. Además gracias por el trabajo tan importante que realizan, y por su fuerza y coraje.

Les agradezco también a mis compañeras, Albin Ölveborn, Malin Petterson y Annie Magnusson por sus críticas constructivas, sus ideas y su apoyo invaluable.

También quiero agradecer a mi supervisora, Edmé Domínguez.

## Abstract

This study explores critical perspectives on the functioning of the mechanism of Alerta de Violencia de Género Contra Las Mujeres, a legal-institutional mechanism on the prevention and elimination of femicidal violence in México. The study uses a case study of the Mexican state of Ciudad de México, and explores the functioning of the mechanism in relation to societal accountability, and rights consciousness as a means for participation. The material used is 6 interviews and two qualitative methods of encoding through narrative structuring and phrase categorization. Obstacles for the functioning of the mechanism are analyzed, in terms of institutional and functionary resistance, lack of coordination, harm, and political manipulation. Conclusions are reached regarding the need for further modifications of the AVGM, to ensure the future of the mechanism and strengthen a disillusioned civil society. Meanwhile, its structure needs to be respected by Mexican authorities and institutions to ensure such.

## Sinopsis

Este estudio explora perspectivas críticas al funcionamiento del mecanismo de ‘Alerta de Violencia de Género Contra Las Mujeres, un mecanismo legal-institucional de la prevención y eliminación de violencia femicida en México. El estudio utiliza el estado de Ciudad de México como caso práctico, para explorar el funcionamiento del mecanismo a respecto a rendición de cuentas social, y conciencia de derechos para establecer participación. El material está constituido por 6 entrevistas y 2 métodos cualitativos para codificación por medio de organización de narrativas y categorización de frases. Se analizan obstáculos para el funcionamiento del mecanismo, desde el punto de vista de resistencia institucional y funcionarios, falta de coordinación, daño y manipulación política. Se llega a las conclusiones de la necesidad de modificar el AVGM, para asegurar su futuro y para fortalecer una sociedad civil desilusionada. La estructura del mecanismo también necesita ser respetada por autoridades e instituciones Mexicanas, para garantizar lo mismo.

## Abbreviations

<b>AVGM</b>	[ <i>Alerta de Violencia Contra las Mujeres</i> ] Gender Based Violence Against Women Warning Alert
<b>CONAVIM</b>	[ <i>Comisión Nacional de Violencia Contra Las Mujeres</i> ] National Commission on Violence Against Women
<b>INMUJERES</b>	[ <i>Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres</i> ] National Women’s Institute
<b>LGAMVLV</b>	[ <i>Ley de Acceso a las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia</i> ] Federal Law on the Access to Women to a Life Free From Violence
<b>SEGOB</b>	[ <i>Secretaría de Gobernación</i> ] Secretary of Government
<b>CNDH</b>	[ <i>Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos</i> ] National Commission on Human Rights
<b>OCNF</b>	[ <i>Observatorio Nacional del Femicidio</i> ] National Observatory of Femicide
<b>INEGI</b>	[ <i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía</i> ] The National Institute on Statistics
<b>BANAVIM</b>	[ <i>Banco Nacional de Datos e Información sobre Casos de Violencia Contra Las Mujeres</i> ] National Database and Information on cases of Violence Against Women
<b>IACHR</b>	Inter American Court on Human Rights
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>CEPAL</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>UNWOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
<b>CIUDAD DE MÉXICO (CdMx)</b>	Mexico City, Capital of Mexico
<b>CONVENTION BELÉM DO PARÁ</b>	Inter American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (1994)
<b>CONVENTION OF SAN JOSÉ [PACTO DE SAN JOSÉ]</b>	The Inter American Convention of Human Rights (1969)
<b>OAS</b>	The Organization of American States
<b>IMDHD</b>	[ <i>Instituto Mexicano De Derechos Humanos y Democracia A.C</i> ] National Institution of Human Rights and Democracy

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## 1. Introduction

In 2007, Mexico adopted the law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence<sup>1</sup> (LGAMVLV), a progressive law on the protection of women's human rights. The legislation symbolizes a comprehensive initiative to eliminate feminicidal<sup>2</sup> violence in Mexico. The legislation is also the first in Mexico to typify femicide and feminicidal violence. It establishes an integral warning alert mechanism, the *Gender-Based Violence Against Women Warning Alert*<sup>3</sup> (AVGM). The Mexican national women's institute (INMUJERES) describes the mechanism as one of its kind in the world on the protection of human rights of women<sup>4</sup>.

The mechanism has a legal-institutional character, which enables the activation and coordination of a "series of government actions of emergency to confront and eliminate feminicidal violence in a given territory when being exerted by individuals or by the own community"<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the mechanism's objective is to guarantee women's as well as children's security and to eradicate the differences which produce inequality within national policies and legislations hindering or violating the human rights of women and children<sup>6</sup>.

With a current number of 11 feminicides<sup>7</sup> a day, Mexico is facing an endemic of lethal violence against women. A situation that for many years has been criticized by local civil society organizations, movements, and activists, as well by the international community. This situation is tinged with a severe paradox. Mexico has in the last couple of years adopted several legislations to eliminate violence against women, as the previously mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia (LGAMVLV) LEY GENERAL DE ACCESO DE LAS MUJERES A UNA VIDA LIBRE DE VIOLENCIA. CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS DEL CONGRESO DE LA UNIÓN. (2007). DOF:18-03-2021

<sup>2</sup> "Feminicidal violence is the extreme, the culmination of many forms of gender violence against women that represent an attack on their human rights and that lead them to various forms of violent death" (p. xxi) Lagarde y de los ríos, M. (2010). Preface: Feminist Keys for Understanding Femicide. In Fregoso & Bejarano (Eds), *Terrorizing Women- Femicide in the Americas*

<sup>3</sup> Alerta de Violencia de Género Contra Las Mujeres AVGM, *ibid* LGAMVLV. (2007).

<sup>4</sup> INMUJERES. (2020). *Alerta de Violencia de Género Contra Las Mujeres*

<sup>5</sup> "Consiste en un conjunto de acciones gubernamentales de emergencia para enfrentar y erradicar la violencia feminicida en un territorio determinado, ya sea ejercida por individuos o por la propia comunidad" (Article 22, LGAMVLV)

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* INMUJERES (2020) ; INMUJERES. (2018). *¿Cuáles son las Alertas de Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres declaradas en México?*

<sup>7</sup> "[...] femicide is genocide against women, and it occurs when the historical conditions generate social<sup>4</sup> practices that allow for violent attempts against the integrity, health, liberties, and lives of girls and women" (*ibid*. Lagarde y de los ríos, 2010, s. xv-xvi).



LGAMVLV, and e.g the national ‘Olimpia’ law<sup>8</sup> and the ‘Alba’ protocol<sup>9</sup>, meanwhile the violence rates have skyrocketed. Additionally, the constitutional reform of 2011 brought human rights to a constitutional level, making national law obey internationally ratified conventions and treaties<sup>10</sup>. Legally this would imply the strengthening of Mexican women’s exercise of rights.

Consequently, many other Latin American countries have adopted substantial improvements since the early 1990s in terms of legislation and actions targeting violence against women<sup>11</sup>. Proceeding from the Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará<sup>12</sup>, which was signed 25 years ago, a majority of Latin American countries today have national plans aiming to eliminate gender violence. 27% of these countries have taken a step further and recognizes more types and modalities of gender violence in their legislations (so-called laws of ‘second generation’)<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, the number of cases of gender violence has only increased. The IACHR<sup>14</sup> warns of high levels of gender-based killings (also known as feminicides), enforced disappearances, sexual violence, and harassment, as well as the severe difficulties for women to attain justice (through deficit legal systems as well as lacking access to information)<sup>15</sup>.

The Organization of American States (OAS) has numerous times stated a serious situation of violence and security in Mexico<sup>16</sup>. This critique is also given by international and national agents<sup>17</sup>, including the Mexican Institute on Human Rights (IMDHD) which states system deficits and institutional weakness which contribute to high levels of impunity: an estimated

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<sup>8</sup> Commonly called the legislation of Olympia, while it is the conjunction of various legislative reforms on the recognition and typification of cyberviolence, online violence and sexual harassments online: (National law since 2021-04-30): Orden jurídico (Gobierno de México). (o.y). *Ficha Técnica - Ley Olimpia*

<sup>9</sup> Alba Protocol: National Mexican Mechanism to enable the coordination between the state levels in the localization of reported missing women: CONAVIM. (2016). *¿Sabes qué es el Protocolo Alba?*

<sup>10</sup> Constitution of the United States of Mexico, last reform 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de América Latina y el Caribe. (o.y) *Leyes*.

<sup>12</sup> Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), adopted in 1994

<sup>13</sup> UNWOMEN & UNDP. (2017). *From Commitment to Action: Policies to End Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean- Regional Analysis Document*.

<sup>14</sup> Inter American Commission on Human Rights

<sup>15</sup> IACHR & OAS. (2015). *Access to information, Violence Against Women, and Administration of Justice*: p. 11

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International. (2020). *Mexico 2020* ; OHCHR. (2015). *Mexico’s relentless wave of human rights violations*; Inter American Court. (2008). *Structural Human Rights Violations: The true face of Mexico’s War on Crime* ; CMDPDH & IMDHD. (o.y). *Access to Justice in Mexico: The incessant impunity on human rights violations*.

98%<sup>18</sup>. As a consequence, victims of human rights violations face extensive difficulties to attain justice. On top of this, official numbers point to at least 40 000 missing or enforced disappearances in Mexico<sup>19</sup>. As a reaction, Mexico has experienced a surge in civil and social mobilizations and movements over the last couple of years, targeting the issues of violence and disappearances.

For the prevention and reparation of human rights violations, OHCHR stresses the importance of rule of law and accountability. These conditions are also fundamental to ensure peace and inclusive development. The importance to hold both public and private duty holders accountable is made visible through conditions of lawlessness, impunity, and deficit legal systems. The accountability and rule of law could be established through legislation that resonates with international human rights law, norms, and standards. Accountability has therefore become a human rights watchword<sup>20</sup>.

Proceeding from this contextualization, this study aims to explore critical perspectives on the functioning of the legal-institutional mechanism of AVGM through a case study on the state of Ciudad de México. This is done by applying the concepts of *right consciousness* as a means for participation and *societal accountability*.

## KEYWORDS

Violence against Women, Human Rights, Femicide, Impunity, Participation, Accountability

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<sup>18</sup> Mexico is hereby the 6th country on the Global Impunity Index from 2019; Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (2020). *Getting away with murder- CPJ's 2020 Global Impunity Index spotlights countries where journalists are slain and their killers go free*

<sup>19</sup> Families and civil rights organizations claim this is a vast understatement- Instituto Mexicano de Derechos Humanos y Democracia (IMDHD). (o.y) *Ejes temáticos*

<sup>20</sup> OHCHR. (o.y). *Strengthening the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations*

## 2. Aim of the Study

This study aims to explore critical perspectives on the functioning of the mechanism of AVGM, proceeding from the learned experience in the federal entity of Ciudad de México. The case study uses a human rights framework on *right consciousness* as a means for participation and *societal accountability*. The study proceeds from 2 processes of activation of the mechanism in Ciudad de México between 2017-2019. To understand the two processes, the study proceeds from six interviews with Mexican professionals and academics who have had direct experience of working with the processes of the mechanism in Ciudad de México, or experiences of the tensions regarding its functioning in nearby Mexican border states.

### 2.1 Research questions

2.1.1 What happened in the two processes of activation of the mechanism in Ciudad de México 2017-2019?

2.1.2 What is the impact of societal accountability on the functioning of the mechanism of AVGM, in the case of Ciudad de México?

2.1.3 How has rights consciousness and participation affected the functioning of the mechanism, in the case of Ciudad de México?

## 3. Relevance for human rights

The study is relevant for a bigger debate on human rights concerning the obligations of states to act to prevent, attend, sanction, and ultimately eliminate violence against women. Also, considering the fact that women worldwide continue to face severe human rights violations. Substantial advances have been made worldwide over the last 40 years in a strive to eliminate violence against women (VAW), which have gone hand in hand with a more extensive recognition of the types of violence targeting women as well as the causes behind it. Instead

of perceiving VAW as isolated events taking place in the private or public sphere, these actions are now understood as “patterns of systematic human rights violations”<sup>21</sup>.

Nevertheless, many states continue to fail to address VAW as well in the provision of remedy for human rights violations, and ultimately to protect women’s right to a life free from violence<sup>22</sup>. This has given rise to various discussions, where a special convention on violence against women is presented<sup>23</sup>, as well the development of various concepts as gender-sensitive governance; accountability, human rights frameworks, and gender mainstreaming has emerged. This is done to repair the gap between the state and the victims in matters of violence against women, but also to call on the international community to take actions, e.g to protect victims of sexual violence in times of armed conflicts<sup>24</sup>.

Ultimately, on the notion of femicidal violence and femicides, this branch of VAW is becoming more discussed internationally by human rights bodies. Not least with the increased VAW rates with the current Covid-19 pandemic, but also with the ongoing development of ‘femicide watches’, where the UN urges states and stakeholders to take actions against femicidal violence<sup>25</sup>.

Therefore, this study is closely connected to tensions regarding human rights advancement, while it at the same time displays how marginalized groups continue to face various obstacles in their exercising of rights.

#### 4. Delimitations

This study does not target violence against women as a whole in Mexico, instead, it focuses on femicidal violence and national legal actions to prevent and address it. As with femicidal violence, this study does not aim to explain how it surges nor why, instead, it

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<sup>21</sup> IACHR & OAS. (2019). *Annex 2: Impacts of Cases- Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls* : p. 5-6

ibid. UNWOMEN & UNDP. (2017).

<sup>22</sup> IACHR & OAS. (2019). *Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls*. Doc. 233

<sup>23</sup> McQuigg, R. J. (2018). Is it time for a UN treaty on violence against women?

<sup>24</sup> Saferworld.(o.y). *Gender and Conflict Early Warning*.

<sup>25</sup> UN News. (2020). *UN expert calls for urgent action to end ‘pandemic of femicide and violence against women*

explores the consequences of feminicidal violence, and the resistance victims face when struggling to access justice.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Choice of research topic

A case study on México concerning VAW and human rights is motivated by the unique mechanism of AVGM. To this date, no other countries have adopted a similar gender warning alert mechanism, not even countries with similar levels of gender-based violence without an official declaration of conflict or war.

### 5.2 Delimitations

The study's time scope is 2017-2019. However to provide the researcher with more context the years 2007-2017 are to a limited extent included in the data collection. 2007 is thus the year of the establishment of the mechanism within the law of LGAMVLV. The years 2017-2019 are chosen as they include the first request in Ciudad de México (07 Sept. 2017), the second request (28 Aug. 2019), as well as the final activation on 26th of November 2019.

Instead of analyzing various Mexican states and comparing (being the original idea), the study focuses only on the federal state of Ciudad de México. This state is considered a progressive state in México, in terms of actions against violence against women (e.g with the legalisation of abortion in 2007). Meanwhile, no declarations were announced before the year 2019, even with signs of high violence rates. As presented in previous research (see chapter), bringing in the experience of civil society mobilizations, movements and activists would have given a bigger depth to the study in terms of experiences related to the functioning of the mechanism with rights consciousness and societal accountability. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, these contacts were difficult to attain, as well as their testimonies should be handled in a much more delicate manner, where interviews on distance did not seem much like an option in terms of ethical considerations and safety concerns.

On theoretical delimitations, societal accountability was chosen to highlight the right holder's impact on the functioning of the mechanism. Analyzing traditional forms of accountability

would not give much in terms of understanding obstacles and opportunities for participation of civil society, taking into account the many deficits and high rates of impunity in Mexico. Right consciousness is chosen as a means to highlight how right holders are enabled or hindered to participate and impact the mechanism, thus understanding the foundation of societal accountability.

### 5.3 Choice of research methodology

Interviews appeared a suitable methodology given previous research and available information on the mechanism. Many previous studies study the legislation of LGAMVLV, analyzing the legislative foundation of the mechanism and directed actions. As AVGM does not have its descriptive policy document, or any guiding principles, interviews constitute a better means to understand AVGM. Furthermore, the study focuses on the learned experience and critical perspectives from those who worked directly with the process of activation of the AVGM, where interviews enable a closer approach. Interviews as a method also seemed a well-suited methodology as the study has a constructivist perspective, given that what we consider our reality is not static nor predetermined. Giving this notion, interviews provide an insight into the experiences of the interviewees.

### 5.4 Interview as a research methodology

The study uses semi-structured interviews which serve as informative sources as well as material for the analysis. The semi-structure was chosen to give depth to the experience of the interviewees as the structure allows a greater flow of conversation, and follow-up and sounding questions. Sounding questions were used as a means to confirm interpretations and correct misunderstandings, as “did I understand you correctly if I interpret you like this?”. Instead of asking and receiving the interviewees answer passively, the informants were encouraged to keep on through signals as nodding or humming<sup>26</sup>. The interviews were recorded to facilitate the analysis of the content, as well as for the study’s transparency.

The interviews were carried out using Zoom, a digital communicative tool for video conferences, webinars etcetera. The interviewees were contacted by email, where the aim of

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<sup>26</sup> Kvale, S. (1997). Den kvalitative forskningsinterview. Studentlitteratur. p. 124-125

the study was given, a short introduction of the researcher, the time frame of the interview (40-60 minutes), and the intended digital platform (Zoom). The interviewees were informed about the choice of collaborating anonymously, considering the critical situation for human rights and feminist activists and allies in Mexico. The email also contained information regarding that the interviews would be in Spanish, given the interviewees varying levels of English. The choice to do the interviews in Spanish was done in consideration and to enable all respondents to feel more comfortable when answering, which also gave more information.

## 5.5 Interviewees

The interviewees (Annex 2) were chosen following research on persons having worked with the AVGM in Ciudad de México. The contact information was found on official websites (as state Universities like UAM and UNAM), official government websites (such as the official website page for the AVGM declarations), as well as some contacts were handed through an earlier internship in 2020 with the Mexican feminist organization of Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia A.C. Given earlier collaborations, the internship supervisor could hand the researcher contacts. After a thorough check-up, nine persons were contacted, where six answered, all agreeing to an interview. The interviewees chosen are both respondents and informants, having witnessed and lived experiences. They furthermore provide information and context regarding the mechanism<sup>27</sup>. Due to difficulties to attain interviews at a distance, no institutional officials were reached (e.g from key institutions such SEGOB, CONAVIM, INMUJERES), therefore all interviewees are academics and legal professionals.

## 5.6 Interview guide

The interview guide (Annex 1) consists of 14 questions, organized by themes. The first theme includes one question on the respondents' knowledge and experience of the mechanism of AVGM, and questions aiming to understand the operational level of the mechanism as well as the role of emblematic cases. This section also provides context, thus containing one question aiming to understand the timeline from 2015 when the first declarations were announced. The following theme is political, economic, and external factors, regarding their impact on

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<sup>27</sup> Morse, J. M. (1991). Subjects, respondents, informants, and participants?.

AVGM. These are the role of functionaries, matters of coordination, and budget allocations. The last theme focuses on human rights, as what AVGM provides in terms of human rights, and relation to the concepts of harm and accountability. The interview questions aim to get a better understanding of aspects relevant to understanding the functioning of the AVGM in Ciudad de México and to provide information regarding the central series of events and timeline. The interview ends with an open question of the informant's perspective on the critique that the mechanism has received.

The study shortly after changed the concept of harm, instead incorporating *rights consciousness* as a means for participation. The study meanwhile kept the material on harm, while now related to the new concepts and theoretical framework. An email was also sent to gather the informant's perception of the new concept, which is also included in the study.

## 5.7 Interviews on a distance

Doing interviews at a distance has its pros and cons. On one hand, this allows the interviewee to be more flexible with place and time and makes issues of recording easier when the whole meeting is already on digital media. On the other hand, the interpersonal dynamics might get lost as the participant's talk from a considerable distance, meanwhile, digital tools can not replace human interaction. One problem which arose was how many of the interviewees struggled with a poor internet connection, giving the need to repeat some parts that got lost and the researcher having to interrupt to ask if they could repeat. One of the interviews even had to be rescheduled due to energy shortages.

## 5.8 Criticism of the sources

The study previously sought out to gather material from various working groups in different federal Mexican states, but as previously mentioned this was not possible at the time. Therefore, the material had to fulfill various purposes, like those mentioned by Rienecker & Jørgensen (2014), where the material becomes 1) *Tools for the search*, 2) *Source of inspiration*, and 3) *Foundation for more general insight and review of the topic* and 4) *As a model for the own research*<sup>28</sup> (although the fourth one not so much). Therefore, the interviews had to fulfill various purposes, also given the limited access to public information from

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<sup>28</sup> Rienecker, L., & Jørgensen, P. S. (2014). *Att skriva en bra uppsats*. Liber. p.200



national institutions and government websites on the AVGM. The material is supplemented with secondary sources, such as academic articles, public national and international documents as well as national newspaper articles (to get more information and coverage on the timeline, as well as emblematic events and mobilizations within the Mexican civil society). The study focuses on academic articles on the AVGM produced by Mexican academics in Mexico, as these are the few sources discussing the mechanism in-depth (the regional coverage and international coverage are scarce, besides a few official UN documents). This is done to incorporate the already existing knowledge, although it could have strengthened the validity and reliability of having other material as well.

## 5.9 Choice of method of analysis

This study uses different methods to structure and analyze the interviews, following how the interviews fulfill various purposes. As the interviews are both for the empirical part of the results, as well as material for the later analysis and discussion, this motivates the choice of methodology for interview analysis.

### 5.9.1 Narrative structuring

Firstly, the interviews are structured through narratives, where the study proceeds from Kvale's (1997) description and steps on - *Narrativ strukturering* - a way of analyzing and structuring the narratives in the interviews. The narrative(s) are now structured following a time-scope and a social context, to further understand the structure of the happenings mentioned by the interviewee. Narrative structuring allows the researcher to connect various parts of the interview which are related to the same events to create a continuum of the story. The structuring in this study focuses on manifest communication by the interviewees on events that can be joined to the same time-scope. The method allows the researcher to get a better understanding of the series of events through the concentration of narratives. This allows an understanding of not only the series of events but also the social dimension, regarding the aspects and details brought forward by the interviewees. Furthermore, an important aspect described by Kvale (1997), is how the narrative shows how interviewees ties to other groups, as with how the 'story-telling' is positioned within a social context<sup>29</sup>. This

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* Kvale, S. (1997). p. 174: 181-182

method for analyzing interviews was used to explore how the interviewees described the first and second process of the activation of the AVGM in Ciudad de México. The method is therefore used for the results section.

### 5.9.2 Categorization of sentences

The second methodology is used for the analysis/discussion section. The method enables concentrating long sequences, thereby categorizing the interview. By doing so, the interviews were hereby encoded proceeding from predetermined categories and/or categories that have emerged with the interviews. This study uses both predetermined categories, as well as categories and subcategories which were discovered while doing and encoding the interviews. Therefore, the categories are both theory-based and a continuum of questions and knowledge arising when interviewing<sup>30</sup>. The pre-categories helped frame the understanding of the functioning of the mechanism (thus proceeding from previous research and background), where the post-categories should be understood in terms of obstacles affecting the functioning of the AVGM. Hereby, the pre-categories helped the researcher to frame the functioning of the AVGM, where the post categories are the ones chosen for the analysis as they develop a previous understanding and add new knowledge and tensions:

<b>PRE-CATEGORIES (FRAMES THE FUNCTIONING)</b>	<b>POST CATEGORIES (OBSTACLES FOR THE FUNCTIONING):</b>
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND EXTERNAL FACTORS HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE AVGM  AVGM AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AVGM AND HARM AND ACCOUNTABILITY (+RIGHTS CONSCIOUSNESS AS A MEANS FOR PARTICIPATION)	1. AVGM OPERATING AS A PUBLIC POLICY VS EMERGENCY 2. EXTENDED PROCESSES OF AVGM 3. LACK OF COORDINATION 4. FUNCTIONARIES AND INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE 5. LACK OF TRANSPARENCY 6. HUMAN RIGHTS - RIGHTS VS OBLIGATIONS 7. HARM PRODUCED BY FEMINICIDAL VIOLENCE 8. LOGICS OF SIMULATIONS

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 174-180

## 5.10 Validity and Reliability of the Study

As aforementioned, the study at first aimed to do a more extensive field study, gathering various experiences and information on the functioning of the AVGM concerning the principles of harm and accountability. This was not possible, and as mentioned the interviewees are all academics and lawyers, thus joining together the academic field and to some extent the civil society demands in terms of violence against women, but no personnel from any of the key institutions of CONAVIM, INMUJERES etcetera were interviewed. This could be considered as a bias as the study only proceeds from “one truth to the story”, namely the opinion of the academics with the process of the declaration of the AVGM in Ciudad de México. But on the other hand, as the institutional representatives were unreachable at the moment, and their responses might be more politically correct this would maybe not have given in-depth answers. The study also wishes to explore critical perspectives, where this bias could be understood.

## 6. Ethical considerations

This study touches on several ethical dilemmas. Proceeding from the eight ethical principles presented by Vetenskapsrådet (2017), this study mainly focuses on the seventh principle, as for the study to not harm<sup>31</sup>. First of all, discussing VAW even with professionals may be triggering (due to professional experiences but also personal), and one needs to be sensitive on the topic. This is also of extra importance as my interviewees describe extreme violence against women, and were one of the interview questions directly aims to understand the importance of cases of femicidal violence for the AVGM in Ciudad de México. With this question, the interviewee is asked to recall cases of femicide.

Due to the risks for the interviewee to participate in the interview, as with dangers facing Mexicans which speak out about injustices, impunity, corruption, and human rights violations, all interviewees were given the option to participate anonymously (already in the first stage of contact). No interviewees chose to do so, either due to feeling more or less secure or since the majority already are more or less public persons.

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<sup>31</sup> Vetenskapsrådet. (2017). *God Forskningssed*.

Ultimately, proceeding from feminist methodology criteria, although the topic is to be considered sensitive, the research and the enabling voices of experiences, is fundamental. As well as taking into account the importance these experiences has for the understanding and future research on VAW, and a participatory approach<sup>32</sup>.

## 7. Previous research

The previous related research provides a foundation for the theoretical framework and does not attempt to cover the current academic field on e.g VAW, and more specifically in Mexico. Instead, the study positions itself and relates to previous research on the AVGM, Accountability in the Latin American context, as well as rights consciousness for victims of VAW.

### 7.1 The mechanism of AVGM

The mechanism has to some extent been discussed both in academia and in media coverage in Mexico but is still not covered much on an international level or by foreign academia. Many scholars, among others academic, anthropologist, and politician Lagarde y de Los ríos (2007) describe in their article the process of the adoption of legislation of LGAMVLV, in terms of prospects and functioning<sup>33</sup>. AVGM is further displayed concerning how it resonates with the Mexican state's human rights obligations. This is further discussed by García-Flores (2020) in their article *El mecanismo de alerta de violencia de género en México: ¿reminiscencia de un diseño normativo garantista?*<sup>34</sup>

Pedraza (2020) addresses in their article *La alerta de género en México. Su falta de efectividad* criticism and deficits regarding the mechanism, as to its lack of effectiveness when it comes to eliminating and preventing femicidal violence. The author relates this to omissions on various institutional and state levels, as well as how it is affected by public

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<sup>32</sup> Skinner, T., Hester, M., & Malos, E. (Eds.). (2013). *Researching gender violence*. Routledge. (p. 12).

<sup>33</sup> Lagarde y de los Ríos, M. (2007). Por los derechos humanos de las mujeres: la Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia.

<sup>34</sup> García-Flores, A. J. (2020). El mecanismo de alerta de violencia de género en México: ¿reminiscencia de un diseño normativo garantista?

policies and budget allocations<sup>35</sup>. Bernal & Flores (2018) also give an important contribution in their article *Feminicidios y Políticas Públicas: declaratorias de alertas de violencia de género en México, 2015–2017* where they discuss the path for the first declarations of the AVGM, as well as the current use of the mechanism by public officials<sup>36</sup>.

Further discussed is the context from which the legislation of LGAMVLV emerges. Salgado, Blancas & Vázquez (2013) address in their article *Feminicide and gender violence in Mexico: omissions of the State and civil demands for justice* the importance of Mexican civil society, especially organized mothers to victims of femicide. They further describe the path towards a state's recognition of its obligations with VAW, a deficit use of LGAMVLV, and ultimately the lack of sanctions towards public officials when accused of omissions, neglects, or wrongdoings<sup>37</sup>.

Various authors discuss the AVGM concerning specific Mexican federal entities, where Romero & Camacho (2020) discusses the clash between a structural understanding of VAW and intersectionality, as with the of public policies and indigenous women's groups in Guerrero<sup>38</sup>. Galaviz (2019) describes the process of declaration of AVGM in the state of Jalisco, with their declaration of a local alert, and where several tensions between civil society and institutional level in terms of addressing the current situation of violence were identified<sup>39</sup>. Cervá Cerna (o.y) discusses the case of the state of Morelos in their article *Alerta de Violencia de Género como Política de Seguridad Pública: El Caso del Estado de Morelos* as an case example of the state failure to prevent, attend, sanction and eliminate femicide violence in México<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Pedraza, Y. R. (2020). La alerta de género en México. Su falta de efectividad.

Cervá Cerna, D. (2017). Varias Miradas, Distintos Enfoques: Los Estudios de Género a Debate Alerta de Violencia de Género como política de seguridad pública: El caso del estado de morelos. Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos.

<sup>36</sup> Bernal, A. L. D., & Flores, J. A. (2018). *Feminicidios y Políticas Públicas: declaratorias de alertas de violencia de género en México, 2015–2017*.

<sup>37</sup> Salgado, M. P. C., Blancas, P. R., Vázquez, T. P. (2013). *Feminicidio y violencia de género en México: omisiones del Estado y exigencia civil de justicia*.

<sup>38</sup> Figueroa Romero, D., & Sierra Camacho, M. T. (2020). *Alertas de género y mujeres indígenas: interpelando las políticas públicas desde los contextos comunitarios en Guerrero, México*.

<sup>39</sup> Galaviz, J. *En Estado de Alerta. El Complejo Camino de la Solicitud para la Activación de la Alerta de Violencia de Género Contra las Mujeres en Jalisco*.

<sup>40</sup> Cervá Cerna, D. (o.y). *Alerta de Violencia de Género como Política de Seguridad Pública: El Caso del estado de Morelos*.

## 7.2 Accountability

Accountability is a vastly contested concept, making it useful in many contexts but also hard to grasp. This section of previous research will handle the concept of accountability in the Latin American context, narrowing it down.

Accountability is extensively used within discourses of human rights but evolved with the strengthening of *political accountability*, a term that is discussed by Mainwaring & Welna (2003) in their article *Democratic Accountability in Latin America*. The authors discuss the concepts proceeding from a regional democratic transition and challenges with institutional deficits, corruption, illegitimate public spendings, and the promotion of efficient policy results. Accountability is hereby a necessity for an accountable exercising of power<sup>41</sup>.

Goldscheid & Liebowitz (2015) analyze accountability with *state responsiveness*, as with *how* and *when* the state in question should take action. They discuss how the demand for state responsiveness relates to demands of a stabilized and robust state, where it previously has been absent or inefficient. This could call for legal actions, such as the development of legislation<sup>42</sup>.

Fox (2007), in *The uncertain relationship between transparency and accountability*, establishes the connection to the concept of transparency, where it leads up to the *right to know*, thus emphasizing the right to information, which stems from civil society demands. This has somewhat resulted in progressive legislation and the right to information being incorporated as a fundamental aspect of human rights. Accountability is a means to respond to the questions of *who answers to whom, who should be transparent to whom, and who is ultimately accountable to whom?* Again, showing a close relation to good governance, and ideas of representation and participation<sup>43</sup>. Similarly laid out by Ho & Pavlish (2011), who adds the dimension of empowering citizens through an extensive recognition of rights and strengthening the capacity to make demands. This is exemplified with the case of gender-sensitive remedies in a refugee camp in Rwanda. The authors relate accountability to the promotion of capabilities in the addressing of violations and strengthening of human

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<sup>41</sup> “I delimit the concept of political accountability to relationships that formally give some actor the authority of oversight and/or sanction relative to public officials. Political accountability is thus a formalized relationship of oversight and/or sanctions of public officials by other actors”. Mainwaring, S., & Welna, C. (Eds.). (2003). (p. 4).

<sup>42</sup> Goldscheid, J., & Liebowitz, D. J. (2015). Due diligence and gender violence: parsing its power and its perils. *ibid.* Mainwaring, S., & Welna, C. (Eds.). (2003).

<sup>43</sup> Fox, J. (2007). *The uncertain relationship between transparency and accountability*.

rights<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, accountability is discussed as central to a human rights-based approach in the making of active subjects, e.g. Yamin (2008), who analyses accountability with empowering and mobilizing people in political and social struggles<sup>45</sup>. These last sources do not proceed from the Latin American context, but provide valuable insight into the connection between accountability and gender-sensitive actions.

Peruzzotti (2008) in their article *Marco Conceptual de la rendición de Cuentas*<sup>46</sup> gives a valuable definition of accountability with the bond established between citizens and political authorities in democratic regimes<sup>47</sup>. Peruzzotti & Smulovitz (2000) in *Societal Accountability in Latin America* sets out the concept of societal accountability, which they define as the relationship between a government and its citizens in terms of conflicts and struggles as to how these shape ‘new democratic regimes and the scope of citizens’ rights’<sup>48</sup>.

### 7.3 Rights Consciousness

Michel & Sikkink (2013) addresses in their article *Human rights prosecutions and the participation rights of victims in Latin America* the necessity of individuals being able to give accounts on human rights violations. They further describe how measuring participation is crucial, especially within human rights proceedings from a human rights-based approach. By doing so, mobilizations within civil society and strengthening of individuals are enabled, as well as the attempt to create a bridge between the international and local community in terms of international human rights law in the endeavor of rights<sup>49</sup>.

Polletta & Jasper (2001) in their article *Collective identity and social movements* describes how civil society mobilizations are joined through collective identities, as for a common interest to mobilize to bring forward demands and claims. These identities also highlight the

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<sup>44</sup> Ho, A., & Pavlish, C. (2011). Indivisibility of accountability and empowerment in tackling gender-based violence: Lessons from a refugee camp in Rwanda. p. 88

<sup>45</sup> Yamin, A. E. (2008). Beyond compassion: the central role of accountability in applying a human rights framework to health.

UNWOMEN (Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence Against Women and Girls). (2020). *Adopting a human rights-based approach*.

<sup>46</sup> *Rendición de cuentas* is the Spanish equivalent to accountability

<sup>47</sup> Peruzzotti, E. (2008). Marco conceptual de la rendición de cuentas.

<sup>48</sup> Smulovitz, C., & Peruzzotti, E. (2000). *Societal Accountability in Latin America*.

<sup>49</sup> Michel, V., & Sikkink, K. (2013). *Human rights prosecutions and the participation rights of victims in Latin America*.

reasons why individuals participate, as to e.g disconfirm a cultural representation, and bring forward others through strategies as lobbying and litigation<sup>50</sup>.

Tsutsui & Wotipka (2004), Finnemore & Sikkink (1998), and Risse-Kappen, Risse, Ropp & Sikkink (1999) all discuss participation in contexts of social movements and in relation to theories on social change. The authors connect participation to notions of ‘norm-cycles’ and ‘norm-cascades’, that is the development and influence of human rights norms as driven by societal actors, in particular NGOs, HROs, and HRINGOs<sup>51</sup>. Participation within human rights hereby highlights the connection between local human rights struggles and the international community, as for the impact they have on each other and how this translates into human rights demands. Murdie & Davis (2012) similarly discusses the relation between the local and the international in terms of human rights demands, where the authors in their article *Shaming and Blaming: Using Events Data to Assess the Impact of Human Rights Ingos*, relates this demand to processes of ‘shaming and blaming’, namely the on the ground actions carried out by HROs to visibilize and condemn state violations, and the mechanisms and strategies to do so<sup>52</sup>.

Ultimately, Gabel (1983) discusses the recognition of legislations and rights of civil society movements, as proceeding from the imaginary to the everyday exercise of rights. The author analyzes how a gap between the imagination and reality might give rise to alienation, in terms of how the subject places itself within different discourses<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Polletta, F., & Jasper, J. M. (2001). Collective identity and social movements.

<sup>51</sup> HRINGO: International Human Rights Non Governmental Organizations

<sup>52</sup> Murdie, A. M., & Davis, D. R. (2012). Shaming and blaming: Using events data to assess the impact of human rights INGOs.

<sup>53</sup> Gabel, P. (1983). Phenomenology of rights-consciousness and the pact of the withdrawn selves.



## 8. Theoretical Framework (Key Concepts)

### 8.1. Violence Against Women (VAW)

This study uses the terminology of violence against women, as this is the concept used within the mechanism of AVGM, and as the mechanism does not open up for other understandings of violence based on anything other than female gender identity. This study takes on a social constructivist approach to gender, proceeding from the understanding planted originally by Simone de Beauvoir, that: “*one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*”, thus differentiating the social construct of gender identity from an idea of a biologically determined gender through our sex<sup>54</sup>. This further gives the notion of the female gender identity as a product of a historical process<sup>55</sup>. VAW should therefore be understood as the conjoint of various systems/structures of discrimination and exclusion on individuals because they are women, and as embedded in social institutions and legislations. This gives a “double vulnerability” as for the difficulties of women to attain justice and therefore the ensuring of the protection of their human rights. This study proceeds from the United Nations definition of violence against women, as:

*“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”<sup>56</sup>.*

### 8.2 Feminicidal violence

Femicidal violence stems from the concept of femicide and its origin, *femicide*. The concept of femicide was first coined by Russell & Radford (1992) in their work *Femicide- The politics of Woman Killing*<sup>57</sup>, while it's in her later work *Femicide in Global Perspective* (2011) where Russel defines femicide as “[...] *the killing of females by males because they*

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<sup>54</sup> Ritchie, K. (2020). Categories We Live by: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories (p. 54).

<sup>55</sup> Gutiérrez, A. A., & Hernandez, O. A. A. (2019). Violencia de género en México, hacia un mapa del feminicidio en Tlaxcala= Gender violence in Mexico, towards a cartography of femicide in Tlaxcala.

<sup>56</sup> WHO. (2021). *Violence Against Women- Key Facts*.

<sup>57</sup> Radford, J., & Russell, D. E. (Eds.). (1992). *Femicide: The politics of woman killing*.

are female”<sup>58</sup>. *Femicide*, a concept coined by Marcela Lagarde y de Los ríos<sup>59</sup>, develops the term, now including structural negligence, discrimination, and the state as an accomplice.

Femicidal violence is understood as one form of gender violence. It is the expression of “dominance, control, oppression, and power over women”, and a mechanism to sustain relations of power, dominance, subordination, and gender inequalities. As with other forms of gender violence, it aims to produce and reproduce identities and subjectivities<sup>60</sup>. Femicidal violence stems from historical and structural inequalities and patriarchal structures of power which legitimizes and normalizes violent acts against women. Closely linked to femicidal violence is, therefore, state negligence and impunity. Moreover, deficit efficiency and lacking access to justice for victims seriously violate women’s right to life. Their lives are deprived and the perpetrator holds the power to decide the actual moment of death<sup>61</sup>.

The study uses the definition of femicidal violence given by Lagarde y de Los ríos:

*“Femicidal violence is the extreme, the culmination of many forms of gender violence against women that represent an attack on their human rights and that lead them to various forms of violent death”<sup>62</sup>.*

Instead of using the definition given in the law LGAMVLV, Lagarde’s definition enables a more extensive definition of femicidal violence, emphasizing a continuum of violence, where the law only mentions ‘misogynist conducts’. The chosen definition is also more closely connected to the understanding given by Argentinian anthropologist Rita Segato on the ‘pedagogy of cruelty’, referring to “[...] all those acts and practices which teach, show the habits of and program subjects to transmute all the living and its vitality in all things”<sup>63</sup>. This is relevant as femicidal violence and its ultimate consequence femicide is tinged with cruel, brutal, and symbolic violence<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Russell, D. E., & Harnes, R. A. (2001). *Femicide in global perspective*. p.3

<sup>59</sup> Lagarde y de los ríos, M. 2010. Introducción. in y de los Ríos, M. L., & Olivera, M. (2010). *Terrorizing women: Femicide in the Americas*.

<sup>60</sup> Olivera, M. 2010. Violencia Femicida. in y de los Ríos, M. L., & Olivera, M. (2010). *Terrorizing women: Femicide in the Americas*. p. 50

<sup>61</sup> Lagarde y de los ríos. 2010. in y de los Ríos, M. L., & Olivera, M. (2010). *Terrorizing women: Femicide in the Americas*.; López, A. C., Caballero, A. G., & Rodríguez, L. C. (2010). Femicide in Latin America and the Movement for Women’s Human Rights. *Terrorizing Women. Femicide in the Americas*.

<sup>62</sup> ibid. Lagarde y de los ríos

<sup>63</sup> “[...] todos los actos y prácticas que enseñan, habitúan y programan a los sujetos a transmutar lo vivo y su vitalidad en cosas [...]”: Segato, R. (2018). *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad.*, p.11

<sup>64</sup> Through processes of precariousness and commercialization, life is made precarious and the capacity to protect life is weakened. This is an inherent part of modern capitalism and current hegemonic paradigms, where

### 8.3 Societal Accountability

On the concept of societal accountability, this study uses Smulovitz & Peruzzotti (2000). The authors address institutional deficits and weaknesses which has historically been an unfortunate characteristic of many Latin American democracies. Although many countries have divided their power into three branches of power, the judicial, legislative, and executive, in reality, the judicial and legislative are often weakened in the controlling and/or limiting of actions of delegate executives, as a direct result of misuse of power balances<sup>65</sup>. Many Latin American countries also experience *discrecionalismo*, namely a discontinuity between elected politics mandate and their public policies, weakening accountability and predictability for the voters. This is accompanied by high impunity rates in many Latin American countries, where horizontal mechanisms of accountability are also weakened.

Societal accountability has emerged as a means to demand accountability outside of the traditional system of accountability and the idea of a “system of checks”. Researchers have previously mainly focused on traditional means of accountability as part of the strengthening of democratic systems. These traditional ways of accountability, as democratic election systems, are although not enough for citizens to claim accountability of their representatives. Instead, societal accountability goes beyond the notion of horizontal<sup>66</sup> and vertical<sup>67</sup> accountability, where civil society agents claim roles beyond ‘*the voter*’. On an operational level, societal accountability may trigger both, through denouncing (making violations visible) and demanding sanctions, thus activating horizontal mechanisms. Hereby, societal accountability may bridge the gap between various processes of accountability, as well as it furthermore criticizes societal structures.

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the commodification of female bodies and the violence it suffers is being normalized at the same times as it’s sustained by patriarchal relations of power and dominance. Production and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity also revolve around *mandates of masculinity*, thus the consolidation of a masculine position before other peers where the *tribute* is crucial. The tribute is defined through the masculine authorization over the female body, and processes of extraction and the consolidation of female subordination. The tribute is also presented together with a confirmation of the disciplinary moral power of the male authority, the power to punish a diverted female subject.

ibid, p. 12:13:41:44

<sup>65</sup> ibid. Smulovitz, C., & Peruzzotti, E. (2000). Societal Accountability in Latin America. p. 148

<sup>66</sup> ibid. Horizontal accountability: “[...] the effective operation of the system of checks and balances and with due process in governmental decision making”.

<sup>67</sup> ibid. Vertical accountability: “[...] elections and other mechanisms that citizens use to control their government”.

Stating that “citizen action aimed at overseeing political authorities is becoming a fact of life [...]”, civil society now monitors agenda settings and decision making<sup>68</sup>. Social movements, social media media, and individuals now actively contribute to the exposure of the state’s non-compliance, which has given rise to “[...] new politics of societal accountability [...]”, thus reshaping the idea and scope of citizen struggle. Looking at civil society actions that have traditionally been overlooked in terms of accountability, we might grasp a deeper understanding of how processes of accountability make up for government deficits<sup>69</sup>.

The study proceeds from the following definition of societal accountability:

*“Societal accountability is a nonelectoral, yet vertical mechanism of control that rests on the actions of a multiple arrays of citizens’ associations and movements and on the media, actions that aim at exposing governmental wrongdoing, bringing new issues onto the public agenda, or activating the operation of horizontal agencies”<sup>70</sup>*

Moreover, societal accountability is a constant form of accountability, as it's not limited to any time-scope or e.g elective system (compared to e.g public elections). It is instead activated on-demand, targeting issues, policies, or functionaries. Societal accountability furthermore requires an active and organized civil society to act as petitioners, present new agendas, and influence public debates. Societal accountability does not need a majority to bring forward claims, instead, it needs a united and intense ‘voice’ (being its main soft resource). Societal accountability is also closely connected to demands on participation and does not strive for absolute control. As it does not require any specific institutional structure, societal accountability is a decentralized form of accountability, and may therefore also overcome structural weaknesses and deficits. In this sense, societal accountability uses a *piecemeal approach*, thus it may target a single issue at the time, and does not have to handle entire e.g public policies<sup>71</sup>.

A downside with societal accountability is that it does not count with legal enforcement, while it on the other hand has a strong regulating and symbolic value. It could be argued that

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.* p. 148-151

Hadenius, A., & Schedler, Andreas. (2001). *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* Smulovitz, C., & Peruzzotti, E. (2000)

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* Smulovitz, C., & Peruzzotti, E. (2000). p. 150

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* p. 147-151

it's not a "real checks on power", where it may be most efficient when combined with the use of media and the justice system<sup>72</sup>.

#### 8.4 Rights Consciousness as a means for participation

For the concept of *rights consciousness* as a means for participation, this study proceeds from Sara Engle Merry - *Rights talk and the experience of law: implementing women's human rights to protection from violence*<sup>73</sup> (2003) and her book *Human Rights and Gender Violence*<sup>74</sup> (2014).

Engle Merry (2003) asks a fundamental question with violence against women, regarding: 'how do people come to see their problems like human rights violations?'. Proceeding from this question, she describes how individuals, part of grassroots movements, *adopt* human rights frameworks. These individuals hereby add an understanding of human rights to previous experiences and knowledge. This contributes to an extended framing of the human rights issues of individuals. These individuals now adopt a *double subjectivity*, namely being survivors as well as allied<sup>75</sup>.

In terms of VAW, this added human rights framework may contribute to the denaturalization of violence, and stop seeing violence as something inevitable. Considering VAW as a transgression of human rights, states are now obliged to punish these crimes, which are to be considered crimes against the state. This further makes VAW a public matter, thus denaturalizing the violence as private and as belonging in e.g the family sphere. These aspects altogether question traditional ways of power and relations, where individuals are now engaged to reconsider what Engle Merry calls a 'local legal consciousness'. Local legal consciousness engages and enables individuals to question structures reproducing inequalities, as well as realizing the transformative capacity<sup>76</sup>.

As for victims of VAW, this logic of engaging is further described by Engle Merry in terms of *rights consciousness*. Engle Merry, proceeding from among others battered women's access to justice in Hawaii, identifies how victims of gender-based violence are greatly affected by

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* Hadenius, A., & Schedler, Andreas. (2001).

<sup>73</sup> Merry, S. E. (2003). *Rights talk and the experience of law: implementing women's human rights to protection from violence*.

<sup>74</sup> Merry, S. E. (2009). *Human rights and gender violence: Translating international law into local justice*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.* Merry, S. E. (2009) p. 182

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* Merry, S. E. (2009) p.182;189

and through encounters with public officials. In the encounter with public officials, the individuals' different subjectivities are affected in various ways through processes of claiming and exercising rights, which will determine (or limit) future actions<sup>77</sup>. Here, the self in terms of rights is reflected. Hereby, right consciousness constitutes the process of adoption of other perspectives and frameworks on behalf of female victims, as to demand obligations. This is done meanwhile not abandoning previous perspective(s) to understand their experiences, instead, creating layers of perspectives<sup>78</sup>.

This process furthermore prescribes the adoption of a 'right defined self'. This adoption may take time and can be considered a long *trial* period. Here the subject 'awaits' what happens in terms of response from duty holders. Engle Merry describes it as a 'feedback model', given it's a conditioned process regarding the institutional response to the individual's claims. When the victim's claims are trivialized, the rights of the victim hereby become a matter of negotiation. This is further reproduced if the perpetrator is not sanctioned, thus reducing the severity of the crime and the violence causing it. This also tells women that their rights are limited. These processes have a big impact on the participation of victims as well as relevant stakeholders<sup>79</sup>. They visibilizes and map 'rights and entitlements' vs 'obligations and responsibilities', and show how seriously the legal system takes her rights<sup>80</sup>. The duration of the adoption of an individual's right consciousness is limited, depending on the institutional support it receives. This is related to how human rights are weakened when not sustained or taken seriously by institutions, as the implementation of rights is fundamental to enable an individual's consciousness<sup>81</sup>.

Women's encounters with public officials hereby "reshape the way these women think about themselves and the relationship between their intimate social worlds and the law". Hereby, human rights are crucial for these processes of legal and rights consciousness, as to strengthen the exercise of rights and the 'emancipatory potential'. Although, addressing one's claims in terms of human rights violations, increases the expectations on the state in question to respect and attend these. If not addressed, the individual might retreat from a rights consciousness, where it might act as only an ally or upon a kinship instead<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.* Merry E. (2003).

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* Merry, S. E. (2009). p. 183

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* Merry. E. (2009) p. 189

<sup>80</sup> Cornwall, A. 2011. Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflection on gender and participatory development. in Cornwall, A. p. 203

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* Merry. E. (2009) p. 183;195

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* Merry E. (2009) p. 182;189;218

These processes are furthermore pushed for by human rights and/or local NGOs and grassroots organizations as they need individuals that “define their problems in terms of rights”, to claim accountability and responsibility of their state in question. As described by Engle Merry; “without victim participation in the identification of violence in rights terms movement activists are unable to further their social reforms”. This is also part of translating human rights to a local context, making it culturally specific<sup>83</sup>.

## 8.5 The use of the theoretical framework

The study hereby proceeds from 4 concepts, namely 1) *Violence Against Women*, 2) *Femicidal Violence*, 3) *Societal Accountability* and 4) *Rights Consciousness* as a means for participation. The study uses the first two concepts as a theoretical foundation, meaning that these concepts are not to be further discussed or analyzed on their own. The later concepts are to be thoroughly analyzed, and combined in the conclusion section to highlight findings.

## 9. Background

In this section, a background is provided regarding rates of VAW in Mexico, human rights advancements in Mexico, the national legal framework on violence against women, international commitments and obligations, and ultimately the legislation of LGAMVLV and its integral mechanism of AVGM.

### 9.1 Violence Against Women and Human Rights in Mexico

Many reports point to a surge of violence and human rights violations in 2006 connected to the Mexican War on Drugs. With the end of the war, Mexico still faces severe violence rates and human rights violations. In their *World Report 2019 on Mexico*, Human Rights Watch targets human rights violations committed by the current administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador<sup>84</sup>. Human rights violations such as torture, enforced disappearances, and abuses against migrants are some of those mentioned, mainly perpetrated by security forces and the national military. The situation for human rights defenders, activists, and journalists is

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.* Merry E. (2009) p. 182

<sup>84</sup> Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), founder of political party Morena, Presidency since 2018

also continuously very severe. The Mexican National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) has reported 148 murdered journalists between 2000-2018<sup>85</sup>.

According to the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>86</sup>, 2.500 women are killed annually in Mexico. Various reports also state how the numbers have increased steadily since 2007. The exact number does although vary, depending on which government body presents it, which obscures the magnitude of the situation<sup>87</sup>. Proceeding from *femicidios.mx*, a crowd maps website put together by María Salguero (an attempt to substitute deficient reportings on femicide), there were 2.100 feminicides in 2016 and 2.200 feminicides in 2017<sup>88</sup>.

On high rates of violence against women, Mexico has received critique from international organizations. The OAS and IACHR have directed recommendations regarding the numerous cases of VAW, throughout all Mexican regions. They have also targeted the high rates of sexual violence, among others targeting detained women as well as female journalists and human rights activists<sup>89</sup>. The UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has also raised the issue of violence against women in Mexico, recommending national legal authorities to immediately address the question. CEDAW has further recommended authorities not to take part in the reproduction of stereotypes that revictimize victims.

On women's right to a life free from violence, several human rights cases in the last 20 years have played an important role in human rights norms and the advancement of human rights and rule of law. One of the most emblematic cases brought before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights is the case of *González et al. ("Cotton Field") v. Mexico*<sup>90</sup> (judgment on Nov. 16, 2009)<sup>91</sup>. The case attends the enforced disappearance, sexual abuse, and homicides in 2001 of Claudia Ivette Gonzalez (20 y.o), Esmeralda Herrera Monreal (15), and Laura Berenice Ramos Monarrez (17) by private actors in Ciudad Juarez, a city located in the

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights Watch. (o.y). *Mexico- Events of 2019*.

<sup>86</sup> Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de América Latina y el Caribe

<sup>87</sup> Blanco, M. A. L. (2019). *Razones de Género en los feminicidios: elementos objetivos y subjetivos en 5 casos de violencia feminicida en Chiapas= Gender Reasons in femicide: objective and subjective elements in 5 cases of femicidal violence in Chiapas*. p. 255

<sup>88</sup> *Femicidios.mx*. (o.y). *Los feminicidios en México*.

<sup>89</sup> IACHR & OAS. (2015). *Country Report: Situations of Human Rights in Mexico*. p. 112

<sup>90</sup> Butler, J., & Polo, A. M. *Alerta de violencia de género*. p.4

<sup>91</sup> Inter-American Court of Human Rights *Case of González et al. ("Cotton Field") v. Mexico*. Judgment of November 16, 2009.



northern Mexican border state of Chihuahua. The case was the first to reach the IACHR, after more than 300 murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juarez in the 1990s, today known as the “femicides of Ciudad Juarez”<sup>92</sup>. With the judgment, the IACHR demanded the state of Mexico to properly address the violence through the establishment of effective legislation and protocols on femicide, and with the consolidation of victims' access to information<sup>93</sup>.

On Mexican politics and public policies, gender equality was briefly mentioned by the previous administration of Felipe Calderon's in their national plan on development 2006-2012. Although, few resources were assigned actions to eliminate gender-based discrimination guaranteeing access to equal opportunities<sup>94</sup>. Allocations of resources to actions to prevent and eliminate VAW have for many years been an obstacle and widely debated matter in Mexico since the mid-1990s. This has coincided with demands from e.g the National Assembly of Women for the Transition to Democracy (1996)<sup>95</sup> and the National Congress of Women for the reformation of the State (with gender equality) (2000)<sup>96</sup>. Both initiatives were established as responses to agreements from the world conference in Beijing in 1995<sup>97</sup>.

## 9.2. Human rights legal framework in Mexico on VAW

### 9.2.1 Constitutional Reform of 2011

OAS and IACHR, in their Country Report from 2015, acknowledged the significant improvements brought with the reformation of the Mexican constitution in 2011. The reformation brought substantial constitutional and legislative reforms. The reform is also considered as one of the most substantial modern reforms in terms of adoption of human

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<sup>92</sup> Gutiérrez, A. & A., Hernandez, O. A. A. (2019). *Violencia de género en México, hacia un mapa del femicidio en Tlaxcala= Gender violence in Mexico, towards a cartography of femicide in Tlaxcala*. Rubio-Martin, R., & Sandoval, C. (2011). *Engendering the reparations jurisprudence of the Inter-American court of human rights: The promise of the cotton field judgment*. p. 1065

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.* Inter-American Court of Human Rights Case of González *et al.* (“*Cotton Field*”) v. Mexico. Judgment of November 16, 2009.

*ibid.* Gutiérrez, A. & A., Hernandez, O. A. A. (2019).

<sup>94</sup> Martínez, G. B. (2012). *Presupuestos públicos con enfoque de género en México: avances, obstáculos y perspectivas*.

<sup>95</sup> [spanish: Asamblea Nacional de Mujeres para la Transición a la Democracia] (1996)

<sup>96</sup> [spanish: Congreso Nacional de Mujeres hacia la Reforma del Estado con Equidad de Género]

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* Martinez

rights in Mexico as “[...] the reform entails a root modification in the way authorities must justify their actions. Such actions must be governed by international standards and obligations on the matter to ensure their direct application in the country”<sup>98</sup>.

Article 1 in the Mexican constitution states how<sup>99</sup>, “all persons shall enjoy the human rights recognized in the Constitution and in the international treaties to which Mexico is a party, and establishes guarantees for their protection”<sup>100</sup>. Furthermore, Article 1 establishes the principle of non-discrimination and that the human rights norms presented in the constitution shall be interpreted following the established definition given by the constitution. It shall also be interpreted in accordance with international conventions, given that the subject of protection is always the point of departure. It further states:

*“All authorities [...] must promote, respect, protect, and guarantee human rights following the principles of universality, interdependence, indivisibility and progress. The State should prevent, investigate, sanction, and repair the human rights violations, in the terms that are established through the law”<sup>101</sup>*

Article 4 declares that women and men are equal before the law, which aims to protect the organizational structure and development of the family. The Mexican state is further obliged to comply with its national legislation on violence against women, adolescent girls, and children<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> *ibid.* IACHR & OAS. (2015). p. 53

<sup>99</sup> Article 1: [spanish: En los Estados Unidos Mexicanos todas las personas gozarán de los derechos humanos reconocidos en esta Constitución y en los tratados internacionales de los que el Estado Mexicano sea parte, así como de las garantías para su protección, cuyo ejercicio no podrá restringirse ni suspenderse, salvo en los casos y bajo las condiciones que esta Constitución establece. Las normas relativas a los derechos humanos se interpretarán de conformidad con esta Constitución y con los tratados internacionales de la materia favoreciendo en todo tiempo a las personas la protección más amplia].

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.* IACHR & OAS (2015). p. 53

<sup>101</sup> Article 1. [spanish: Todas las autoridades, en el ámbito de sus competencias, tienen la obligación de promover, respetar, proteger y garantizar los derechos humanos de conformidad con los principios de universalidad, interdependencia, indivisibilidad y progresividad. En consecuencia, el Estado deberá prevenir, investigar, sancionar y reparar las violaciones a los derechos humanos, en los términos que establezca la ley]

<sup>102</sup> Article 4: [spanish: La mujer y el hombre son iguales ante la ley. Ésta protegerá la organización y el desarrollo de la familia].

OAS furthermore highlights the importance of the recently established official protocols to properly investigate cases of torture and disappearances. The OAS does nonetheless state the need to detect and evaluate state deficiencies, thus eradicating obstacles for the implementation of the reforms. The organization also identified gaps between the legislative forces and frameworks, as well as the legal access of the Mexican population. Critique is also directed to the failure to decrease levels of violence in the country, exemplifying among others the debated and impune case with the forced disappearance of the 43 students in the state of Guerrero in 2014. The case evidence inefficiency and deficiency to properly investigate and the impunity surrounding these crimes<sup>103</sup>.

### 9.2.2 International and Regional Human Rights Commitments

In terms of international treaties and conventions ratified by the Mexican state related to the protection of women's rights, the state of Mexico has ratified CEDAW in 1981, the CAT-OP optional protocol of the Convention Against Torture in 2005, the CEDAW-OP optional protocol to the CEDAW in 2002<sup>104</sup>, the United Nations Protocol to prevent, suppress and sanction trafficking in persons<sup>105</sup> and the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights - "Protocol of San Salvador" (ratified in 1996)<sup>106</sup>. Mexico is also part of international human rights initiatives to eliminate VAW, such as the Spotlight Initiative, a UN project financed by the European Union<sup>107</sup>.

On a regional level the country has ratified the Inter American Convention of Human Rights (Convention of San José) in 1981, and the Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) in 1998<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* IACHR & OAS. (2015). p. 11-12

<sup>104</sup> OHCHR (UN Treaty Body Database). (o.y). Ratification Status of Mexico.

*ibid.* OAS & IACHR (2015). p. 52

<sup>105</sup> OHCHR. (o.y). Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ( the Trafficking Protocol). Resolution A/RES/55/25 of November 15, 2000

<sup>106</sup> OAS (Department of International Law). (o.y). Multilateral Treaties: Signatories and Ratifications: A-52: Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador"

<sup>107</sup> Spotlight Initiative. (o.y). Spotlight Initiative: A hope to fight femicide in Mexico

<sup>108</sup> Inter American Commission on Human Rights & OAS. (o.y). B-32: American Convention on Human Rights "Pact of San José, Costa Rica": Ratification Status

### 9.2.3 National Legal Framework on VAW

Mexico is a democratic multi-party federal republic, constituted by 32 states and the federal district, which is all united within one federation. As for the supreme executive power, this is held and exercised by the Mexican president. The government is divided into the legislative, executive, and judicial power, where the executive power is held by the governors of every state<sup>109</sup>.

Mexico has developed various legal tools to protect Mexican women's rights, as with the General Law on the Equality between Men and Women (2006)<sup>110</sup>, General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence (LGAMVLV, 2007)<sup>111</sup>, Law on the integral protection of Women (2009)<sup>112</sup>, Law to Assist and Eradicate Family Violence (1996)<sup>113</sup>, General Law for Victims (2013)<sup>114</sup> and Federal law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination (2003)<sup>115</sup>. Several legislations have also been adopted in the last couple of years following emblematic cases, such as Law Olimpia and Law Ingrid. The first one, federal law since 30th of April 2021<sup>116</sup>, recognizes and criminalizes cyber violence, being any act that violates the sexual intimacy of a person<sup>117</sup>. The latter is an extension of the criminal code of Ciudad de México, Article 239, on the strengthening of victim's rights, criminalizing the diffusion of photos, videos, audios, or documents by public officials. This aims to typify gender-based violence stemming from these conducts using any media<sup>118</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.* IACHR & OAS, p. 51

<sup>110</sup> Cámara de Diputados del. H Congreso de la Unión y Secretaria General & Secretaria de Servicios Parlamentarios. (2018). *Ley General Para La Igualdad Entre Mujeres y Hombres* (2006)

<sup>111</sup> Cámara de Diputados del. H Congreso de la Unión y Secretaria General & Secretaria de Servicios Parlamentarios. (2021). *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia* (2007)

<sup>112</sup> *Ley de Protección Integral a las Mujeres* (2009)

<sup>113</sup> *Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal*. (2017). *Ley de Asistencia y Prevención de la Violencia Familiar* (1996)

<sup>114</sup> Cámara de Diputados del. H Congreso de la Unión y Secretaria General & Secretaria de Servicios Parlamentarios. (2020). *Ley General de Víctimas* (2013)

<sup>115</sup> Cámara de Diputados del. H Congreso de la Unión y Secretaria General & Secretaria de Servicios Parlamentarios. (2020). *Ley Federal Para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación* (2003).

<sup>116</sup> *La Octava*. (2021, 30th of april). *Aprueban Ley Olimpia: se castigará el acoso digital hasta con 6 años de cárcel - La Ley Olimpia prevé penas mayores cuando el delito lo cometa el cónyuge de la víctima o alguien con quien tuviera una relación sentimental. La Octava.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.* Orden jurídico (Gobierno de México). (o.y). *Ficha Técnica - Ley Olimpia*

<sup>118</sup> Orden jurídico (Gobierno de México). (o.y). *Ficha Técnica- Ley Ingrid*

In 2014, Mexico adopted a national penal code for criminal procedures, now including procedures on the protection of human rights<sup>119</sup>. Mexico has also established various protocols on the federal level for cases of VAW<sup>120</sup>. The country has also institutionalized the work on promotion of gender equality, as with the National Institute of the Mexican Woman (INMUJERES), with local institutions in all 32 states, and the National Commission on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women (CONAVIM)<sup>121</sup>. These institutions are also institutionally connected to the Secretary of Health, the National Institute on Statistics (INEGI), the National Population Advisory (CONAPO), and various legal agents such as the General Attorney of the Republic, and its various sub-departments that handle e.g VAW. Finally, Mexico has its own Human Rights Commission (IMDHD)<sup>122</sup>.

On violence against women, Mexico has also developed various mechanisms. One of these is the national system of ‘semáforos’, a government system that uses the colors of red, yellow, and green lights to alert the population on high rates of violence. Every federal entity has its own lights, where the violence is categorized by e.g homicide, kidnappings, extortion, etc, but where also gender-specific categories such as rape and femicide are included<sup>123</sup>. Another mechanism is the Amber Alert System, a national and international system for underage (below 18 years old) disappearances, aiming to coordinate and enforce cooperation between government entities, digital media, civil society organizations, relevant companies, and academia<sup>124</sup>.

On femicidal violence, Mexico today counts with a National Observatory on Femicide (OCNF). OCNF is a non-governmental initiative that monitors, systematizes information, documents cases of femicide, and provides legal accompaniment to families and victims of femicide. OCNF unites observatories, commissions, and NGOs throughout 23 federal states. They furthermore work with the implementation of LGAMVLV, and the integral coordination between the national and international levels in terms of human rights<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.* UNWOMEN & UNDP. (2017).

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.* Gutiérrez & Hernandez, p. 311

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.* Martínez, G. B. (2012).

<sup>122</sup> Lagarde y de los Ríos, M. (2007). Por los derechos humanos de las mujeres: la Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia.

<sup>123</sup> Gobierno de México. (o.y). *Semáforo Delictivo*

<sup>124</sup> Gobierno de México. (o.y). *Alerta Amber - ¿Qué es AAMX?*

<sup>125</sup> Observatorio Nacional de Femicidio (OCNF). (o.y) *¿Quiénes somos?*

Ultimately, Mexico today has a National Database on cases of Violence Against Women (BANAIVIM), providing electronic documentation on cases, protection orders, and general information on prevention and assistance<sup>126</sup>.

### 9.3. Law LGAMVLV

The Mexican Legislation on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence<sup>127</sup> (LGAMVLV) from 2007 is recognized as progressive legislation on the protection of women's rights. With its integral mechanism of AVGM, it constitutes a comprehensive initiative by the Mexican state to prevent, sanction, and eliminate VAW. These principles are established in Article 1 in LGAMVLV, as well as the responsibility to guarantee "[...] the access to a life without violence which favors her development and wellbeing according to principles on equality and non-discrimination"<sup>128</sup>.

The law establishes strong coordination among federal entities and with international human rights commitments and obligations. It also establishes the responsibility of all entities to assign public spending and administration for the cause of the law (Article 2). In terms of coordination, the legislation also establishes a National System on the Prevention, Attention, Sanctioning, and Elimination of violence against women, as well as a National Integral Program on the Prevention, Attention, Sanction, and Elimination of violence against women (Article 35-38). Article 6 establishes the different types of violence against women, as psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic, sexual, or any other action that attempts to hurt the "dignity, integrity and freedom of women"<sup>129</sup>. Article 7-26 establishes the modalities

<sup>126</sup> Banco Nacional de Datos e Informacion Sobre Casos de Violencia Contra las Mujeres (BANAIVIM). Banco Nacional de Datos e Informacion Sobre Casos de Violencia Contra las Mujeres- Bienvenido/a.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.* Cámara de Diputados del. H Congreso de la Unión y Secretaría General & Secretaria de Servicios Parlamentarios. (2021). Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia (2007)

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.* Article 1. The Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico; La presente ley tiene por objeto establecer la coordinación entre la Federación, las entidades federativas, la Ciudad de México y los municipios para prevenir, sancionar y erradicar la violencia contra las mujeres, así como los principios y modalidades para garantizar su acceso a una vida libre de violencia que favorezca su desarrollo y bienestar conforme a los principios de igualdad y de no discriminación, así como para garantizar la democracia, el desarrollo integral y sustentable que fortalezca la soberanía y el régimen democrático establecidos en la Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.* Article 6. Los tipos de violencia contra las mujeres son:

I. La violencia psicológica. Es cualquier acto u omisión que dañe la estabilidad psicológica, que puede consistir en: negligencia, abandono, descuido reiterado, celotipia, insultos, humillaciones, devaluación, marginación, indiferencia, infidelidad, comparaciones destructivas, rechazo, restricción a la autodeterminación y amenazas, las cuales conllevan a la víctima a la depresión, al aislamiento, a la devaluación de su autoestima e incluso al suicidio;

II. La violencia física.- Es cualquier acto que inflige daño no accidental, usando la fuerza física o algún tipo de arma u objeto que pueda provocar o no lesiones ya sean internas, externas, o ambas;

III. La violencia patrimonial.- Es cualquier acto u omisión que afecta la supervivencia de la víctima. Se manifiesta en: la transformación, sustracción, destrucción, retención o distracción de objetos, documentos personales, bienes y valores, derechos patrimoniales o recursos económicos destinados a satisfacer sus necesidades y puede abarcar los daños a los bienes comunes o propios de la víctima;

of violence, e.g family, institutional, political and femineicidal violence, as well as the state's responsibility to detect, sanction, and eliminate these modalities of violence.

The law has been modified various times. One of the most important reformations was the one in 2013, where the regulations of LGAMVLV were modified to make the mechanism more "useful, efficient and transparent"<sup>130</sup>. The general law has been adopted by several Mexican states, which today count with their federal laws, as Ciudad de México that has its legislation LAMVLV-CDMX<sup>131</sup>.

#### 9.4 The mechanism of AVGM

The mechanism of 'Alerta de Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres' (AVGM), was established in 2007 through the law of LGAMVLV. The mechanism is established in the fifth chapter, Article 22:

*"It is the combination of government actions of emergency to deal with and eradicate femineicidal violence in a given territory, being executed by individuals or by their own community".*

The mechanism aims to eradicate femineicidal violence, defined in Article 21:

*"It is the extreme form of gender-based violence against women, being the result of a violation of her human rights, as well in the public as the private sphere, constituted by the combination of misogynist conducts that might bring about/result in/lead to social and State impunity and might culminate in homicide as other forms of violent death of women"*

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IV. Violencia económica.- Es toda acción u omisión del Agresor que afecta la supervivencia económica de la víctima. Se manifiesta a través de limitaciones encaminadas a controlar el ingreso de sus percepciones económicas, así como la percepción de un salario menor por igual trabajo, dentro de un mismo centro laboral;

V. La violencia sexual.- Es cualquier acto que degrada o daña el cuerpo y/o la sexualidad de la Víctima y que por tanto atenta contra su libertad, dignidad e integridad física. Es una expresión de abuso de poder que implica la supremacía masculina sobre la mujer, al denigrarla y concebirla como objeto, y

VI. Cualesquiera otras formas análogas que lesionen o sean susceptibles de dañar la dignidad, integridad o libertad de las mujeres.

<sup>130</sup> Lucas, B., & Roth, F. (2018). *México- Mecanismo de Alerta de Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres - Informe de evaluación del funcionamiento del mecanismo*. INMUJERES & CONAVIM.

<sup>131</sup> SEMUJERES. (o.y). *Informe*

Article 23 establishes the main objective of the mechanism:

*“The ‘alerta de género contra las Mujeres’ will have as its fundamental objective guaranteeing the security of the same, the end to the violence against her and to eliminate the inequalities produced by a legislation that aggravates her human rights [...]”.*

Article 24 states that the activation of AVGM shall be announced in situations of:

*“[...] common crimes against women’s lives, liberty, integrity, and security, breaching the social peace in a given territory and the request by society; ii) a similar grievance impeding the full exercise of women’s human rights; and iii) at the request of human rights organizations at the national level or of the federal entities, civil society or international organizations”<sup>132</sup>*

Ultimately, Article 26 establishes state obligations in terms of human rights and international law. These are the impartial right to justice, the right to rehabilitation, the right to satisfaction (regarding how measures address and repair violations).

According to CONAVIM the mechanism’s objective is to guarantee women’s and children’s security and to eradicate those differences producing inequality within national politics and legislations hindering or violating their human rights. The mechanism also reflects “the federative government’s commitment with human rights”, and stresses the need for transparency in the processes of declarations of AVGM<sup>133</sup>. AVGM may be declared in situations of emergency where women’s exercise of human rights are in severe danger, where the mechanism of AVGM becomes partially a human rights instrument. These situations are established as to when a prevailing legal code or public policy contains or is applied in an e.g. discriminative manner that violates women’s human rights<sup>134</sup>.

The mechanism is requested by civil society organizations, national and/or international human rights organizations. When received by the Secretary of Government (SEGOB) a working group is established, responsible for investigating the request on the basis of the

<sup>132</sup> Translation done in *ibid.* OAS & IACHR 2015, p. 114

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.* CONAVIM. (2020). *ibid.* INMUJERES. (2018)

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.* CONAVIM. (2020).



conditions in Article 24. The civil society organization in its request declares why AVGM (in terms of femicidal violence) should be declared and in which territories (municipalities).

The working group (WG) consists of 1 representative from CONAVIM (coordinator), 1 representative from the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), 2 representatives from an academic institution localized in the state of question (specialized in violence against women), 2 representatives from an academic institution which researches violence against women on a national level and ultimately 1 representative for the mechanism from the corresponding entity<sup>135</sup>. The WG then carries out visits to the location [spanish: *in situ*] in question, and produces a report on the current situation, as well as conclusions and recommendations to prevent violence against women. The report is then handed to the state in question. With former regulations, the state, if accepting the recommendations, had 6 months to carry out the actions suggested in the document. Having passed 6 months, the state is responsible for handing in an evaluation to the WG of the actions taken. Levels of improvements are evaluated, followed by voting of WG on the activation or not of the mechanism. With later regulations, if the state in question does not accept the recommendations, the AVGM should be activated automatically. SEGOB is the responsible entity to announce the decision<sup>136</sup>. If declared, the state in question is obliged to:

1. **Implement** preventive actions of security and justice, to confront and defeat femicide violence
2. **Create** special reports about the areas and the patterns of indices of violence against women
3. **Assign** all necessary budgetary resources to react to the contingencies of gender violence alert
4. **Publicize** the reason for the gender violence alert, and the geographic area encompassed by the measures to be implemented. The issuance of gender violence alerts is the competence of the federal government through the ministry of interior and is notified in the executive branch of the state where it is issued<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *ibid.* CONAVIM. (2020).

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.* OAS & IACHR, 2015, p. 113

The AVGM in its organizational structure includes various levels, civil society as petitioners, academic representatives who participate in the working groups, and the federal state who is responsible for the realization of the recommendations. If the actions are not satisfactory, it is responsible for the actions proposed with the declaration of AVGM. Apart from these agents, CONAVIM and SEGOB are responsible for monitoring the processes to maintain transparency and efficiency<sup>138</sup>.

#### 9.4.1 Declarations of AVGM

In 2015, the OAS expressed concerns about the low number of AVGM's having been declared in Mexico. The OAS also expressed concerns regarding the complaints received by the commission on refusals to declare AVGMs, taking into account various civil society requests but no declarations<sup>139</sup>. In 2013, the LGAMVLV was modified, a change pushed for by OCNF, leading to requests now being officially registered<sup>140</sup>.

The first declarations of the AVGM were announced in 2015, by the state of Estado de México and Morelos. To this date there are 20 declarations announced in 78 municipalities in the federal states of Campeche, Colima, Chiapas, Durango, Estado de México, Guerrero, Jalisco, Morelos, Michoacán, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Veracruz, Quintana Roo, Nayarit, Veracruz, Zacatecas, Oaxaca and Ciudad de México.

SEGOB has in total received 27 declaration requests, where 9 requests were declined in the states of Guanajuato, Baja California, Puebla, Cajeme-Sonora, Tabasco and Tlaxcala<sup>141</sup>. There are also open and current requests according to official data. This implies decisions on the activation or decline of AVGM which has not yet been made. Ultimately, LGAMVLV does not prescribe a time scope for an activated mechanism, meaning that no declarations have been closed or inactivated to this date.

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<sup>138</sup> Ponce, M.G.R., & Núñez, E. La alerta de violencia contra las mujeres en Jalisco Cobertura de medios de febrero a diciembre de 2016. *Com y De Infen* 127.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.* OAS & IACHR. (2015). p. 114

<sup>140</sup> Scholars defend both low levels of requests and consciousness on the law, as well as government resistance to use the mechanism

Hincapié, S. (2017). Acción colectiva de las mujeres y derechos humanos en México: movilizándolo el dolor en medio del conflicto armado. *Estudios Socio-Jurídicos*, 19(2), 97-127.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.* INMUJERES (2020).

## 10. Results

The results section summarizes the two processes of the activation of the mechanism. These are the results of the *narrative structuring* of the interviews, thus the structuring of the timeline 2017-2019 and the series of events from which the analysis proceeds. Given the methodology, quotes from the interviewees are not used to exemplify, instead, the interviewee's narratives provide a timeline, and highlight the most important events. Official meeting protocols are only used to verify the exact dates. Ultimately, the results section proceeds from the first research question, where the other 2 are analyzed in the analysis/discussion section.

### 10.1 What happened in the two processes of activation of the mechanism in Ciudad de México 2017-2019?

#### 10.1.1 The first request

On the 7th of September 2017, the two organizations, Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Francisco de Vitoria O.P.A.C (representative Miguel Concha Malo), Justicia Pro Persona A.C (Ana Yeli Pérez Garrido) and Observatorio Nacional de Femicidio (OCNF) handed in a request on the activation of the mechanism in Ciudad De México. The request established the existence of 'a context of feminicidal violence', given the high rates of feminicides, disappearances, sexual violence, as well as impunity and discrimination of institutions when attending victims in the state. It also stated the human rights obligations of Mexico, referring to international human rights treaties, previous human rights cases, as the Cotton Field sentence<sup>142</sup>. A summoning call was made to set up the WG, where it was decided the participation of public officials from SEGOB, especially from CONAVIM, CNDH, INMUJERES, a local institute (also INMUJERES) and 4 academics, namely Iris Rocío Santillán Ramírez, Marta Torres Falcón, Aleida Hernández Cervantes and Carlos Echarri Cánovas. On the 20th of October 2017, the installation and first session of the working group was carried out.

The working process was initiated, with the academic's visits to key locations and institutions, as well as the gathering of testimonies from families, victims, and human rights

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<sup>142</sup> INMUJERES. (2017). *Asunto: Solicitud de Declaratoria de Alerta de Violencia de Género para la CdMx- 07 sept. 2017.*

defenders. In late 2017, the site report and recommendations, based on the gathered information and data, were handed to the representative of CONAVIM. Shortly after, CONAVIM changed representatives, leading to a summoning call from the new representative of CONAVIM, where the academics, following suggestions and critique, had to redo the report.

Recommendations and specific indicators are finally handed to the government of Ciudad de México, and an approximate of 6 emergency measures. These measures had been developed by the academics while waiting for the procedure of the declaration to advance due to several delays. After 5 months the report was finally passed to the federal government of Ciudad de México by CONAVIM.

Following national elections in 2018, the new administration of Ciudad de México took office. The new appointed governor of Ciudad de México was Claudia Sheinbaum. The WG was handed the final report from the government, which they evaluated based on the indicators. The indicators were evaluated based on being fulfilled, partly or no advancement. The academics concluded that the advancement was very little, thus requesting the activation of the mechanism. This decision ultimately lied with SEGOB to decide. It seemed clear that Ciudad de México was a context that put women at risk of femicidal violence. Notwithstanding, on the 7th of June 2019, SEGOB, through CONAVIM, proclaims the final resolution declaring that the necessary elements were not joined to declare the proceeding of the AVGM in Ciudad de México. Stating its non-activation. Instead, 17 specific measures were established by CONAVIM, to fulfill the suggestions from the working group<sup>143</sup>.

### 10.1.2 The second request

The 28th of August of 2019, SEGOB and INMUJERES in Ciudad de México receives the request of the immediate activation of the mechanism of the organization Fundación Nosotros Por ti-Asociación Civil through their representative Odet Mariana Rivera Pineda<sup>144</sup>. The formal legal process of the first request appeared as having ended with the public announcement on the non-activation of the mechanism. Yet, the process continued, now undertaken by civil society organizations, namely the two petitioners Justicia Pro Persona and

<sup>143</sup> CONAVIM & SEGOB. (2019). *Resolución de la Secretaría de Gobernación respecto la solicitud de Alerta de Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres para la Ciudad de México- 07 junio de 2019*.

<sup>144</sup> Secretaría de Gobernación & INMUJERES. (2019). *Fundación Nosotros Por ti, Asociación Civil* (Official Request). 28 Aug. 2019.

OCNF, and brought to court in September 2019. The first request had mainly been based on cases of femicide, while the second request came about with the mobilizations of young persons in the capital, denouncing sexual violence in the public and communal sphere, as well as at public universities. Massive demonstrations in the capital under the banners of “No me cuidan, Me violan” [english: ‘They don’t protect me, they rape me’]<sup>145</sup>, with women demonstrating against femicides, sexual violence, and experienced insecurity, raged. The first request was hereby brought to *Amparo* [english: *an act of exercising rights*], namely to court, a legal process that the petitioners won. The request intended the 9 municipalities [spanish: *alcaldía*] of Gustavo A.Madero, Azcapotzalco, Iztapalapa, Tlalpan, Xochimilco, Álvaro Obregon, Benito Juárez, Cuauhtémoc and Venustiano Carranza<sup>146</sup>. A local and national summon for the working group opened on the 24th of September and was closed on the 27th<sup>147</sup>. On 1th of October, another summoning is made (due to few candidates), now for 2 representatives from a local academic - or research institution, as well as another, summon on the national level<sup>148</sup>. On the 18th of October, the committee of selection constituted by among others representative from CONAVIM, INMUJERES, SEGOB, announces the representatives of the working group<sup>149</sup>. The working group continued the procedure of producing a site report, following minutes from their meetings, on 26th November and 2th December 2019. A report from the working group with recommendations, statistics, and indicators is published. Simultaneously, a public announcement was made on the 25th of November by governor Claudia Sheinbaum, having handed in her request on 21th of November. On her behalf, a public announcement of the activation of the mechanism in Ciudad de México was made on the 26th of November 2019, which is still in force today<sup>150</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> Camhaji, E. (2019, 17 sept.). Un juez ordena proteger a las mujeres de Ciudad de México ante la violencia machista - Las organizaciones feministas dan un plazo de dos semanas a las autoridades para que entre en vigor la alerta de género. *El País*.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.* CONAVIM & SEGOB. (2019).

<sup>147</sup> (a) SEGOB, CONAVIM & INMUJERES. (2019). *CONVOCATORIA PÚBLICA PARA LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO, PARA CONFORMAR EL GRUPO DE TRABAJO, DE ACUERDO A LA FRACCIÓN IV, DEL ARTÍCULO 36 DEL REGLAMENTO DE LA LEY GENERAL DE ACCESO DE LAS MUJERES A UNA VIDA LIBRE DE VIOLENCIA - CONSIDERANDO*

<sup>148</sup> (b). SEGOB, CONAVIM & INMUJERES. (2019). *CONVOCATORIA PÚBLICA PARA LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO, PARA CONFORMAR EL GRUPO DE TRABAJO, DE ACUERDO A LA FRACCIÓN IV, DEL ARTÍCULO 36 DEL REGLAMENTO DE LA LEY GENERAL DE ACCESO DE LAS MUJERES A UNA VIDA LIBRE DE VIOLENCIA - CONSIDERANDO* : *ibid* (a) SEGOB, CONAVIM & INMUJERES. (2019).

<sup>149</sup> SEGOB; CONAVIM & INMUJERES. (2019). *RESULTADOS DE LAS CONVOCATORIAS PÚBLICAS PARA CONFORMAR EL GRUPO DE TRABAJO PARA LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO AL QUE SE REFIERE EL ARTÍCULO 36 DEL REGLAMENTO DE LA LEY GENERAL DE ACCESO DE LAS MUJERES A UNA VIDA LIBRE DE VIOLENCIA - Ciudad de Mexico, 18 de octubre 2019*

<sup>150</sup> Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, Jefatura de Gobierno. (2021). *Declaratoria de Alerta por Violencia contra las Mujeres es un acierto que ha funcionado: Sheinbaum Pardo*

## 11. Analysis / Discussion

Having described the two processes of the activation of the mechanism in Ciudad de México in the results section, this chapter proceeds by exploring the functioning of the mechanism with the material gathered through the interviews. The analysis is structured through the other 2 research questions, namely:

- 1) *What is the impact of societal accountability on the functioning of the mechanism of AVGM, in the case of Ciudad de México?*
- 2) *How has rights consciousness and participation affected the functioning of the mechanism, in the case of Ciudad de México?*

The themes decoded from the material are obstacles to the implementation and functioning of the AVGM, as described by the interviewees. They may be categorized as 1) AVGM operating as a public policy vs emergency, 2) Extended processes of AVGM, 3) Lack of Coordination, 4) Functionaries and Institutional Resistance, 5) Lack of Transparency, 6) Human Rights - Rights vs Obligations, 7) Harm produced by Femicidal Violence, 8) Logics of Simulations, which will be discussed in relation to the two questions throughout the analysis. The categories are not presented in any particular order, instead, they follow the structure and relevance of the discussion. Finally, the analysis proceeds from the concepts established in the chapter of theoretical framework, namely: 1) Violence Against Women (VAW), 2) Femicidal violence, 3) Societal accountability and 4) Rights Consciousness as a means for participation. As previously mentioned, the first two only provide a theoretical foundation and will not be further discussed. A more in-depth description of the interviewees is provided in Annex 2.

## 11.1 Societal Accountability

This first section summarizes the interviewee's perception of accountability with the AVGM, where the latter analyzes the impact of societal accountability on the functioning of the mechanism.

All interviewees stressed the normative importance of AVGM in Mexico, where a vast majority describes it as a mechanism of accountability. The AVGM establishes coordination (Article 22) which bolsters accountability of state institutions and entities at different government levels. It furthermore creates a normative and legal foundation that defines and enables actions against feminicidal violence in Mexico. Xipatl Contreras describes these two aspects as the biggest assets of the mechanism. Nevertheless, the reality is, in terms of advancements and violence rates, very different, which will be discussed henceforth in the following sections.

The AVGM is consequently described by the interviewees as a means to visibilize human rights violations committed by the state and its authorities; create a necessary public debate on the issue [feminicidal violence]; include civil society [as petitioners]; oblige accountable agents on national, federal and municipality level to 'work on the issue' [feminicidal violence]; demonstrate past omissions [by accountable national agents]; show the necessity to attend the emergency of violence against women; criticize a status quo on the matter [now at least creating a level cero]; enable an organized civil society of families, social and political movements and organizations to drive reforms and demands; demand transparency regarding e.g public spendings; enable civil society and organizations to participate and monitor legal- and institutional processes; recognize an institutional *machismo*<sup>151</sup> and the patriarchy; stop seeing cases of feminicidal violence as isolated; give feminicidal violence a name on an institutional level and ultimately illuminate violence against women as a structural issue.

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<sup>151</sup> *Machismo*, and '*violencia machista*' [english: *machista violence*] are by some used indifferently referring to gender based violence in Latin America, proceeding from the word for man in spanish (macho) and a cultural specific masculinity, thus machismo. The concept has its origin from the 1940-50s in Mexico, stemming from a nationalist and patriotism project, affecting and shaping a 'true masculinity', as the bearer and representative of a developing nation. Processes of shaping this masculinity are also very tinged by patriarchal institutions, such as the Catholic Church, and economic changes, thus contributing to the *macho proveedor* [english: *male provider (breadwinner)*]; Triana, S. V. (2014). Teoría transfeminista para el análisis de la violencia machista y la reconstrucción no-violenta del tejido social en el México contemporáneo, p. 71.72

### 11.1.2 The structure of AVGM

Described by Peruzzoti, societal accountability is a form of accountability exerted outside of any traditional system of checks, where civil society constitutes a social agent to bring forward demands and claims. Moreover, it may also criticize already existing structures, a fundamental aspect in terms of strengthening various forms of accountability. Proceeding from this, the analysis initiates analyzing the *structure* of AVGM, as the structure itself enables accountability and transparency.

According to the interviewees, the structure of the mechanism is fundamental in terms of enabling and sustaining accountability. One example is the site reports [spanish: *informes*] where authorities are legally obliged to publicly present their obligations and the proposed actions directly related to AVGM. An argument made by Aleida Hernández Cervantes is that the site reports are the most important means of transparency and accountability. Although, she stresses that the government reports need to be considered beyond merely a bureaucratic task. In her opinion, the reports are not done carefully enough and are furthermore not displayed publicly (besides on official government websites). Making these reports available to the public and civil society would enable public discussions which could encourage entities in charge to incorporate societal feedback. According to Marta Torres Falcón, the responsible public officials must also specifically inform the population in the determined territory on the activation and what the activation implies. This briefing is somewhat missing today, contributing to an unawareness of the AVGM. Finally, on the note of the site reports, Iris Rocío Santillan Ramirez stresses their importance, meanwhile, there are several obstacles in terms of low institutionalization, and lacking evaluation and monitoring:

*“I believe that with the ‘informes’, with which one requests, that is one form of accountability, what is unwell is what I told you that there’s no monitoring, there’s not this institutionalization surrounding authorities that they need to ‘make accountable’, that they should inform in a transparent manner [...]”.*



With the site reports and the established structure of the AVGM, processes of accountability, transparency, coordination, and *who's accountable to whom*, and *how*, should hereby be clear, according to Andrea Medina Rosas:

*“[...] the mechanism has to serve to construct coordination, to generate trust, and from here we can all give accounts [...] it's not only about putting 'informes' on a CONAVIM website, instead it must come from the methodology, the processes of dialogues, in the construction of coordination, and then, to whom do you give accounts, and of what do you give accounts?”*

Hereby, the mechanism's structure establishes processes of accountability and enables societal accountability, while excluding societal feedback. What happens therefore is a limited production of information and insight into the working process. In terms of societal accountability, the possibility for societal initiatives to target issues and functionaries and provide feedback is weakened, thus contributing to lacking transparency and societal monitoring and evaluation of the process. Not enabling societal feedback may be considered resistance from government officials to enable the participation of civil society, beyond being exclusively petitioners. Also, the poor quality of information reproduces unawareness of the AVGM, thus obstructing participation of civil society. To conclude, although the AVGM establishes a valuable structure for participation and accountability, it is weakened by the misuse of state institutions, thus having implications for the functioning of the mechanism.

### 11.1.3 Social mobilizations and the 'voice' of societal accountability

As described by Peruzzoti, societal accountability does not require a majority to bring forward or legitimize its claims. Yet, it does need an *organized* civil society to *actively* demand accountability, presented through one 'voice'. Societal initiatives of societal accountability, may through this voice contribute to visibilize wrongdoings and present new agendas. On this note, this section analyzes how this 'voice' manifested itself in the case of the activation of the AVGM in Ciudad de México, and moreover *who* constitutes this voice. This will enable a deeper understanding of the impact of societal accountability on the functioning of the mechanism, with its from-below structure.

First of all, to analyze this ‘voice’, we must first understand the role of civil society in the activation of AVGMs. The mechanism legally establishes civil society as petitioners, while they lack formal access to the working process. This legality could therefore be considered hindering civil society to actively monitor and impact the process from within. Therefore, both civil society monitoring and petitioning are placed outside of the legal and institutional structure of the mechanism. In the case of Ciudad de México, these actions of monitoring and demands were among others made up by media coverage and manifestations. Contreras describes various of these initiatives, especially the demonstrations held by groups of organized women and adolescents in Ciudad de México, such as the 8th of March, as well as initiatives from movements, under the banner of #NiUnaMás<sup>152</sup>. These conjunctions of civil society actions of societal accountability contributed to make visible violence against women and to demand state actions. They furthermore pushed for the activation of AVGGM in Ciudad de México.

A key group that seemingly constitutes the ‘voice’ of societal accountability, in this case, are organized mothers who demand justice in cases of feminecidal violence. Torres Falcón describes the group consequently:

*“[...] and the women, these women, mothers of girls who were murdered, they have this, I don’t know how to say it, it’s like a way of life, after the deaths of their daughters they have dedicated, it’s like their main occupation, condemning the death of their daughters. I believe it’s in some way an elaboration of the grief [...]”.*

To exemplify further, an emblematic case from the first request is analyzed. The case is the femicide of Lesvy Berlín Rivera, following the interviewee’s declarations on emblematic cases. Lesvy, a 22-year-old Mexican student, was killed on the campus of the public National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) on the 3rd of May 2017 by her partner at the

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<sup>152</sup> The banner and hashtag #NiUnaMás [english: *Not one [woman] more*], originally comes from the words of poet and human rights activist Susana Chávez. Fighting against feminecidal violence in Ciudad Juárez, she was killed in 2011. The hashtag and banner is used extensively within other Latin American feminist movements, such as the Ni Una Menos movement [english: *Not only [woman] Less*], initiated in Argentina 2015, as well as the Mexican feminist movement of #VivasNosQueremos [english: *We Want Us Alive*] from 2014.

Blanco, M. R. (2019). *Del Ni una más! al NiUnaMenos: movimientos de mujeres y feminismos en América Latina*. (p. 48). : Rovetto, F. L. (2015). *Violencia contra las mujeres: comunicación visual y acción política en “Ni Una Menos” y “Vivas Nos Queremos”* (p. 16).

time, Jorge Luis González (29 y.o)<sup>153</sup>. The case and the social mobilizations caused by it pushed for the demands of the activation of the mechanism. The case had been left impune and showed severe government deficits, resistance from public officials to take on the case, and the typification of femicide (legal officials instead presented it as a case of suicide). Coming back to the key group, Medina Rosas describes the importance of Lesvy's mother, Aracely Osorio, in making the case known. Her experience with encounters with legal agents showed evidence of great deficits and government resistance to address the violence. These aspects were also found in various other cases of femicide and femicidal violence, thus making the case central in the struggle for other victims and families.

This group was also identified by Hernández Cervantez and Torres Falcón through their WG visits *in situ*. When collecting testimonies, they noticed the number of mothers and female relatives and the absence of male relatives and partners. Although the multitude of cases of femicide in Mexico leaves many behind to grieve, the 'voice' which performs pressure to demand actions, seemed to be mostly made out of women. This may be related to what's described by Torres Falcón, which identifies a general opinion of femicidal violence as a 'women's issue'. This obscures the transgression of rights and the harm produced by femicidal violence.

Hereby, civil society 'used' among others the case of Lesvy Berlín Rivera to visibilize governments' deficits and victims lacking access to justice in the first request of the activation. The case is not very different from other cases but seems to have appeared in a moment of strong social and political mobilization in Ciudad de México, an argument made by the interviewees as well. Through the 'voice' and the use of the emblematic case, civil society managed to demonstrate how Ciudad de México constituted a context of femicidal violence. The similarities with other cases of femicide also achieved the mobilization of other victims and families. This altogether provided the right circumstances and conditions for requesting the activation of AVGM. Although this 'voice' of societal accountability was organized and intense, for a long-term impact, it would need to be institutionally recognized. If not, the claims, initiatives, and exposing of wrongdoings may become a matter and responsibility of a limited number of civil society organizations and individuals. Also, as

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<sup>153</sup> Elena Treina. (2017, 13th of July). Los cabos sueltos del misterioso 'caso Lesvy'- EL PAÍS tiene acceso a un vídeo de la UNAM en el que se observa cómo el novio golpea a la joven minutos antes y a pocos metros donde apareció su cadáver. *El País*

analyzed in this section, only pushed for by key groups, e.g organized mothers. These initiatives might also be discarded by duty holders, as the petitioners are acting *outside* of the established structure of AVGM. Thereby “*taking matters into their own hands*”. Also, if the violence is only considered a ‘women’s issue’, this reduces the harm it causes and obscures the necessity of public officials to give accounts. To rely on societal initiatives of accountability to demand wrongdoings is also doubtful, given the dangerous situation for activists in Mexico.

#### 11.1.4 Legal sanctions and the political use of the activation of AVGM

Proceeding from Peruzzoti, actions, and processes of societal accountability are crucial as they may substitute while most importantly strengthen other traditional forms of accountability. With the traditional three branches of power in Latin America, these actions of societal accountability may therefore trigger and reinforce other institutionally established processes of accountability. To exemplify this idea, the analysis proceeds to analyze the series of events of the 1) Court Case and 2) Activation of the AVGM, in terms of exploring the impact of societal accountability on the functioning of the mechanism.

Firstly, the first request, as previously mentioned, was brought to court by the two organizations Justicia Pro Persona and OCNF in September 2019. The case was motivated by the process of the AVGM having extended its time frame (in process approx. 2 years), thus violating its objective as an emergency mechanism. Two agents of civil society hereby demanded its immediate activation in Ciudad de México. The demands also targeted a public official, namely governor Sheinbaum, as there were hopes that she would be more receptive and responsive than previous governors and public officials, according to Santillán Ramírez. The court case was won by the petitioners, namely the two organizations, where the government was handed recommendations. Shortly after, a second request is handed in. Hereby, civil society petitioners initiated a legal process on the activation of the AVGM, thus triggering other forms of accountability.

Secondly, although the AVGM was activated on the 26th of November of 2019 by governor Claudia Sheinbaum, this activation displays various tensions on the functioning of the mechanism with demands of societal accountability. The governor activated the mechanism

on her initiative, thus departing from the ongoing process with the second request. The decision could therefore on the one hand be considered an urgent response to the court recommendations and massive demonstrations in the capital, and the overall extended process. However, on the other hand the governor had had one year to resolve the issue, and she had not done it. Finally, the activation followed several months after the judgment.

In terms of the decision motivated by a context of femicidal violence in Ciudad de México, this activation was not optimal. The governor left out earlier recommendations from the WG and the court recommendations, according to the interviewees. Sheinbaum instead dictated other measures<sup>154</sup> for the AVGM in Ciudad de México, several on sexual harassment and sexual violence. One of these was to create a DNA database of perpetrators of sexual violence<sup>155</sup>. Although sexual violence was described in the WG recommendations, these recommendations had handled extensive reforms targeting legislations and judicialization on crimes of sexual violence according to Santillan Ramirez. These aspects had been ignored by the governor's measures.

Hereby, the government response was more likely a response to reports of sexual violence, rather than the continuum of violence established in the LGAMVLV, according to Medina Rosas. The activation may therefore be considered a political response to the conflict on AVGM between civil society and the local government, and as a political move from the authorities. According to Marta Torr s:

*“They declared it [the activation] publicly, therefore they did not have to engage with the academics, nor the national commission on human rights. I mean, this is a political use of the mechanism [...]”*

The interviewees describe this political use of the activation as a reaction from public officials to show progress. However, the public official's response does not coincide with the necessary actions to solve the issue. The activation could therefore be considered as a result of political necessity, rather than as a reaction to the emergency of the situation.

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<sup>154</sup> [The official government website with the dictated measures has been removed]

<sup>155</sup> For more information on the database and the proposed actions:

Almudena Barrag n. (2021, 27th of April). Ciudad de M xico crea un banco con el ADN de violadores y feminicidas - El registro gen tico de los agresores sentenciados forma parte de un conjunto de medidas contra la violencia machista del Gobierno de la capital. Est  previsto que est  operativo en agosto. *El Pa s*.

Furthermore, Santillan Ramirez describes the limitations to the governor's actions, in terms of political will:

*“I guess she [Claudia Sheinbaum] has the will but it falls short because of political issues [...] to show that the government has not functioned the way it should [...].”*

Lack or constrained political will, together with lack of transparency regarding government deficits, is not new with the mechanism, according to the interviewees. On the contrary, since the first couple of years of the existence of the mechanism, it has been a general problem. According to Ortega, this is also related to experienced stigmatization of institutions:

*“They felt stigmatized, between them a version circulated that whoever activates the ‘alerta’, well, is in the eye of the hurricane and would [have to] take personal responsibility for the machista violence”*

Hereby, the court case came about through societal initiatives of societal accountability, which triggered horizontal accountability, namely *legal sanctions*. These actions were crucial to make visible the extended process and to demand public officials to make decisions regarding the AVGM in Ciudad de México. The court case contributed to further legal recommendations, thus strengthening the evidence of a context of femicidal violence. The governor did not incorporate these recommendations, thus obscuring the reality of the situation and instead mainly targeted sexual violence. What happened, therefore, is an activation that showed a political and legal commitment to prevent, attend and sanction femicidal violence, meanwhile, the dictated measures were not effective nor targeted the necessary aspects to attend. Civil society demands were hereby not addressed properly. The use of the activation of the AVGM did not correspond with what they petitioned for in the first place, nor the legal sanctions which they've triggered. The demands were also constrained by a lack of political will, and partially by politicians experiencing stigmatization. These aspects altogether affected the impact of social initiatives of societal accountability in relation to the functioning of the AVGM.

### 11.1.5 The complicated use of AVGM by civil society

The final activation hereby displays a lot of the tensions regarding societal accountability and the functioning and use of the mechanism. Another aspect that will be mentioned only briefly, is the somewhat complicated use of the AVGM by civil society. This is regarding how AVGMs eventually should be translated into public policies. Even so, the mechanism is today not designed to handle all violence against women. According to the interviewees, a tendency has arisen, where both civil society demands and the academics (WG) wishes to use the AVGM to substitute deficient or non-existing public policies. As exemplified by Hernández Cervantes:

*“We want as a desperate society, as direct and indirect victims [of gender-based violence] make everything fall within the mechanism, while it's a mechanism that should only be used for emergencies, to attend the urgent problem [...]. [...] we make everything fall within the mechanism as with all the gaps and lacks within the permanent public policies [...].”*

A valuable comparison, given by the informants, is the AVGMs and the system of DN3 (DN III E), Mexico's National Emergency System for Natural Disasters. The DN3 is activated in times of natural disasters and is constituted by a plan of emergency enforced by the Mexican military forces. The AVGM should likewise act upon an *emergency*, in terms of disastrous levels of violence, according to Hernández Cervantes. It furthermore requires a similar system of assignment of resources and coordination.

Hereby, the mechanism is a valuable mechanism to demand government actions targeting contexts of feminicidal violence. What happens, though, seems triggered by the high violence rates on VAW in general in Mexico, where attending various forms of violence is most urgent. Even so, the mechanism can not replace any public policy. This tendency may weaken and affect the functioning of the mechanism, also in terms of societal accountability as the mechanism cannot possibly attend all VAW. These demands must, although, be taken into account and incorporated into other government actions, and not be set aside as actions that simply do not fall within the objective of the mechanism.

### 11.1.6 Simulations: the government replaces civil society

One of the main strengths of societal accountability described by Peruzzoti is its *symbolic* and *normative* value. This is at the same time its greatest weakness. Societal accountability often relies on other forms of accountability to control and monitor political misuse of power and to push forward demands. Proceeding from this notion, the analysis continues analyzing in a bigger depth the final activation of the AVGM, to understand the so-called ‘logics of simulations’.

Simulations [spanish: *simulación*] are described by Medina Rosas as a general non-fulfillment of obligations of public officials and the Mexican state, whilst displaying advancements. The described events, with the activation of AVGM in Ciudad de México, could be considered results of simulations. According to Torr s Falcon, in the first request, the government had only completed 30% of the WG recommendations, while still refusing to declare the activation. She describes aspects of simulations within the government's response:

*“They did not declare the ‘alerta’ but they did a series of recommendations, and the main representative [CONAVIM] told us, look, it’s not a declaration but it’s like it would have been declared because in any case, we are giving recommendations”.*

Triggered by the process initiated by the post-activation, the WG turned into a multidisciplinary and interinstitutional group, responsible for evaluating and monitoring actions. In this case, as the activation was done by a government official, the role of this multidisciplinary and interinstitutional group may be considered weakened as the government had replaced several functions within the established structure of the AVGM. This translates into a lack of transparency, efficiency, and even negligence. This is related to what’s described by various interviewees, as they express uncertainty regarding what happened with and since the activation. This is also related to obstacles in the implementation and operating of the LGAMVLV as well as the AVGM. Not only is it important what is established by law, but very much how the operators use the mechanism, an aspect stressed by all interviewees.



Ultimately, worth mentioning is how this logic of simulations did not arise only with the mechanism. All the interviewees highlight the logic as a result of past international recommendations provided through among others human rights sentences. One of these cases is the ‘Cotton Field’ sentence (2009), where the Mexican state was found guilty of having violated parts of the CEDAW. Other emblematic cases (according to the interviewees) are Rosendo Padilla Pacheco v. Mexico (2009)<sup>156</sup>; Women Victims of Sexual Torture in Atenco v. Mexico (2018)<sup>157</sup>; Rosendu Cantú and other v. Mexico (2010)<sup>158</sup>. With these cases, a logic of silencing violence and simulations have emerged, as well as a conflict of values, according to Medina Rosas:

*“I will not do anything, this is the logic of the Mexican state, and this has been its logic throughout the process of the reports in Ciudad Juárez, all the litigation with the Cotton Field case, all the litigation before the CEDAW [...] then of course if the state believes that pretending not to see the violence, takes away its responsibility, of course, a mechanism that is the opposite, that tells it that it must recognize to act in a specific way, creates a conflict of values [...]”.*

Hereby, these logics of simulations weaken societal accountability, as the demands brought forward by civil society are not dealt with correspondingly in a responsible way. It also weakens the normative and symbolic value of the activation. These logics seem fueled by past experiences of human rights violations perpetrated by the Mexican state, thus wanting to silence the reality of the situation as a means to escape accountability, international attention, and further recommendations. The final activation showed the government’s will, meanwhile, it debilitated the legal and formal structures of monitoring and evaluating the mechanism. Thus weakening the AVGM itself. The structure was weakened as the governor replaced civil society as the petitioner. Hereby, a public official states *why* the activation is needed, and which actions should be taken. These aspects have implications for the functioning of the

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<sup>156</sup> CMDPDH. (o.y). *Rosendo Radilla*

<sup>157</sup> IACHR. (2018). INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS -CASE OF WOMEN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL TORTURE IN ATENCO *V.* MEXICO JUDGMENT OF NOVEMBER 28, 2018 - (*Preliminary objection, merits, reparations and costs*)

<sup>158</sup> IACHR. (2010). CORTE INTERAMERICANA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS CASO ROSENDO CANTÚ Y OTRA *V.S.* MÉXICO- SENTENCIA DE 31 DE AGOSTO DE 2010- (*Excepción Preliminar, Fondo, Reparaciones y Costas*)

mechanism, in terms of how advancements and decisions are displayed, versus the actual government will to attend the violence.

## 11.2 Rights consciousness as a means for participation

This section proceeds from the second research question, namely; *How has rights consciousness and participation affected the functioning of the mechanism, in the case of Ciudad de México?* The analysis aims to analyze the main features which have impacted rights consciousness and participation. The section also analyzes the impact of these two concepts on the functioning of the mechanism. The earlier mentioned themes are also analyzed here, especially resistance.

### 11.2.1 Legal encounters, resistance, and re-victimization

Proceeding from Engle Merry, processes of rights and legal consciousness enable individuals (right holders) to question structures, inequalities and enhance their agency and capacity. These processes of right consciousness are thus slow and are affected by the individual's surroundings as well as the responsible duty holders. This *feedback model* is thus a reflection of the resonance between rightsholders and duty holders, and in terms of violence against women, this has consequences for the recognition of women's human rights and their extent. This section will analyze how victims and families (right holders) are affected by encounters with legal agents, constituting the primary levels of prevention and recognition of femicidal violence. This is analyzed as to how these *encounters* enable or hinder processes of rights consciousness as a means for participation, and how this affects the functioning of the AVGM.

The necessity of victims and families demanding actions against femicidal violence, thus e.g reporting, is described by all the interviewees. This is not only demonstrated within the actual time-scope, but also in earlier years. Families and victims have performed pressure and together with (supported by) civil society organizations pushed for the first requests and activations of AVGMs throughout Mexico. This is also the case with the first request in Ciudad de México. These agents contribute to illuminating the magnitude of the problem, evidencing contexts of femicidal violence, as well as revealing underlying causes.

Evidencing a context of femicidal violence is fundamental for the AVGM, and gives civil society, victims, and families a central role.

With the increased rates of violence against women in the last couple of years, civil society mobilizations targeting the violence have grown in numbers, according to Hernandez Cervantes. Civil society, together with victims and families, are stating the increased rates, meanwhile also showing public officials *where* the violence is perpetuated. This is also done within the AVGM requests, thus briefing the authorities on which municipalities or if required, the whole federal entity. As described by Hernandez Cervantes, victims and families have also needed to show evidence of contexts where the violence may turn into femicidal violence. This all goes together with the conditions that the AVGM requires, namely to evidence a context of femicidal violence in a *determined territory*, to activate targeted and coordinated government interventions. This evidence is further investigated by the WG, where ultimately the decision lies at the corresponding government body to decide if this is enough to activate the mechanism or not.

The evidence provided of a context of femicidal violence is also demonstrated by victims and families with the visits *in situ* done by the WG. Of the 5 days of the visits, 2 of these specifically target victims and families, as a means to gather testimonies and to understand the reality of contexts of femicidal violence beyond mere numbers. However, in the case of Ciudad de México, the places to visit (chosen by public officials) did not coincide with what the request had pointed out, according to Santillan Ramirez. Several locations, among others the public prosecutor's office on homicide, the assistance center of misplaced and absent persons<sup>159</sup>, and the supreme court of justice were not included. These locations were included only at the demand of the academics. Excluding key locations, the reality of femicidal violence is obscure and disregards the evidence provided by victims and families. This may be considered institutional resistance.

Not visiting key locations, does also make the working process less efficient, and contributes to extended processes of AVGM. All the interviewees mention this tendency of wanting to extend the working processes on behalf of institutions and public officials. According to

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<sup>159</sup> Centro de atención personas extraviadas y ausentes (CARITAS)

Hernandez Cervantes, this is related to institutional and functionaries ignorance and deficit operative knowledge:

*“And there are extended processes for various reasons that I am commenting, among others, because of the institutional resistance, because it is a theme that is not understood because there is a lot of ignorance on the theme from the functionaries and public functionaries, there are those who have the will, and there are those that have knowledge [while] they lack the operative matter”.*

This resistance is also accompanied by a serious problem of systematization and production of data. According to Medina Rosas, although Mexico is considered a country that has advanced greatly in comparison to the region, the systematization and production of data have not followed. According to the interviewees, the data produced lacks the necessary categorization to be efficient. This makes the investigations of the WGs qualitative and extensive, thus also extending the expected time scope.

It is important to briefly analyze the reasons behind this institutional resistance. One of the main issues hindering the evidencing of contexts of femicidal violence is the resistance to accept these cases as femicides and not homicides or suicides. This is described by Contreras:

*“ Now we have 11 femicides a day [...] this was a big battle, thanks to all these organizations, succeeding to put femicide, because of course, to this date there is a big resistance from authorities to pass a women’s death, making it suicide or homicide. Because of course, they don’t want the numbers on femicide to inflate”.*

The tendency to extend processes is also fueled by gender stereotypes, prejudices, and common sayings and ideas, having consequences for the prevention of femicidal violence on an early stage, described by Hernandez Cervantes:

*“The majority of them [families and victims] when they arrive to report, what they do [legal agents] is that they use stereotypes and*

*prejudices, they tell the families that surely [she] left with the boyfriend, so, valuable time, like the 48 first hours, are lost. They minimize it [the disappearance], they send the families away telling them to wait, that they should await the notice that they will return with a grandchild [...] a lot of things that do not 'stay just as phrases', instead they are inactions from the institution, inaction that could have saved a life".*

Ultimately, as a consequence, many victims and families fear revictimization when handing in reports to public ministries (the first entity receiving reports). If the cases are attended as e.g suicides, this has consequences for the access to justice, as this typification immediately closes the case and prevents further investigation.

Hereby, regarding the functioning of the AVGM, these tensions and obstacles in the encounter with legal agents and institutional representatives weaken the foundations of the AVGM. The legal agents constitute, among other agents, the primary level of the AVGM and are many times the first representatives that victims encounter, here at a municipality level. Families and victims are crucial to evidence a context of femicidal violence but are hindered in various ways in the reporting and their access to justice. Therefore, not only do the family and victims themselves have to incorporate and handle processes of recognition of rights, but also need to convince duty holders to adequately address the matter, and to use law LGAMVLV and the AVGM. This hinders their perception of future actions and may limit their perception of their rights and the obligations of duty holders. When faced with stereotypes and prejudices, they are also re-victimized, which may constitute a trauma hindering future demands as well as the recognition of rights and entitlements. Ultimately, when the violence is not being recognized as femicidal violence, this weakens the notion of the violence as a transgression of human rights, as violating and harming, and as constituting a severe obstacle for victims' access to justice.

### 11.2.2 The harm caused by feminicidal violence

Proceeding from Engle Merry, when victims' claims and demands are trivialized, the rights consciousness becomes undermined and constrained. When the perpetrator(s), institution(s), or state in question are not sanctioned, the violation caused by violence against women is reduced and risks being undermined and normalized. This harms the victims both in terms of the non-reparation and remedy to the consequences of the violence, as well as the experience of the perpetrator who walks free (impunity). It furthermore also affects the relationship between women and their surroundings, as well as how they perceive legislation. If the harm or violation is not recognized, the individual may furthermore retreat or set aside the imaginary of rights consciousness. This section hereby briefly analyzes the *harm* which is caused by feminicidal violence, and how this affects rights consciousness and participation of victims and families, and its impact on the functioning of AVGM.

Femicidal violence and its ultimate consequence, femicide, not only deprives a woman of her life but also damages the relations and networks in her surrounding. According to all interviewees, families and victims who seek justice in cases of feminicidal violence are not only harmed by the case itself, but also in their struggle for justice which many times exposes them to further danger. Hernandez Cervantes describes how the *tejido comunitario* of families and victims [english: *communal web*] is damaged as they are persecuted and threatened. Many even have to leave their communities.

On the notion of harm, another aspect is what the violence communicates to other women. With high rates of feminicidal violence, many women live with the fear of being the next one. This limits these individuals in terms of mobility, safety, and the number of reports. As described by Torres Falcón:

*“The harm caused by the feminicidal violence does not only target the women who are killed. It is against all women. And in fact against all of society [...]”.*

Not only do the high rates of feminicidal violence send a message to all women. The cruelty that tinge these cases, as described by Hernandez Cervantes, does also have an impact:

*“ [...] in our country this is a fundamental theme, it's a horrible theme, having more than 11 women killed daily, and beside the horrible ways in which it is executed, it is crueller every time [...]”*

The harm is not only a direct consequence of the violence, it is also aggravated by institutions, public officials, and governments trying to silence the situation, according to Santillan Ramirez:

*“There's this intention to hide, this happens in all organizations like in the family [...] it's better if we silence this. It seems to me that the Mexican state was like that, we should silence that they are killing women here, that this context does not exist, that it stays in the dark”.*

This furthermore obscures the structural causes, and the magnitude of the harm caused by femicidal violence, according to Medina Rosas:

*“I believe that the ‘alerta’ has to be this mechanism that would allow measuring all this structural and social harm. Because of this, our anger is directed towards how the federal government wishes to reduce the ‘alerta’, and wishes to reduce it to some statistics, some data. The mechanism deep down aims to say which are the structural causes that lead to this, and which are the measures that we have to take to eradicate this”.*

Recognizing the harm through the AVGM also provides the conditions to understand femicidal violence, as well as to connect cases of killings of women, as described by Ortega:

*“[...] it is an institutional way of recognizing that ‘machismo’ exists, that the patriarchy is there. Before they were like isolated cases, or women who were victims because there are men who are*

*'cabrones'<sup>160</sup>, or sick, like if they were. The mechanism has helped little by little to make the system visible and understand it differently”.*

Hereby, there are various ways in which harm is reproduced by femicidal violence. The aspects analyzed affect processes of rights consciousness as it communicates the risk to possible next victims. It also makes visible state omissions and neglect regarding the high rates of violence and its cruelty. This is furthermore reproduced with the government's tendency to silence the situation. With this urge to silence the situation, governments are not publicly recognizing the violence and furthermore contribute to impunity, as well as alienating right holders access to justice. Right holders and demands from victims, families, and civil society are also weakened due to the damages that the violence has on social networks, families, and communities. The government's omissions furthermore send a normative message to the public in terms of how the harm is to be perceived, thus devaluating women's rights and safety. It also obscures the societal damage and displacement of persons and families, as the result of murdered and missing women in Mexico. Ultimately, as for the functioning of the AVGM, the harm both shows the gravity of the situation as well as it may weaken the foundation which provides the necessary evidence of a context of femicidal violence.

### 11.2.3 Recognition of rights versus obligations - the use and understanding of human rights

Proceeding from Engle Merry, as for the duration of processes of rights consciousness, individuals must adopt a human rights framework, thus expanding previous knowledge and experiences. Right holders hereby define violence in terms of human rights violations, as survivors of violence as well as allied with right holders with similar experiences. This is furthermore a reaction against the normalization of violence, where an emancipatory potential is explored. With this, the individual explores and maps its rights and entitlements, thus the extension of rights. This section analyzes how the *adoption* of a human rights framework and rights consciousness is enabled through the AVGM, and how this impacts the functioning of the mechanism.

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<sup>160</sup> Mexican slang [spanish: *cabrones*]; Macho men, negatively associated with notions of toxic masculinity, sometimes related to masculinities and discourses reproduced within narco culture : Morales Arroyo, G. (2020). *Transgresión social y género: notas conceptuales y epistemológicas para una sociología feminista de la transgresión.*



To enable the adoption of a human rights framework, human rights norms and obligations must permeate institutions and governments, and translate into concrete actions. According to all interviewees, even with the reform of the Mexican constitution in 2011, on government and municipality levels, the knowledge of human rights and commitment is hesitant. As described by Ortega:

*“It takes work because for the functionaries in general the international human rights framework is not clear. They do not feel that it is something that concerns them, because in Mexico it took until 2011 that the constitution was modified to include human rights in the first constitutional article. Then, there’s still a lot of old functionaries that believe that the international agreement and what’s established through these is not binding to the service that they provide”.*

Ignoring the link between human rights and international agreements and the obligations of functionaries and institutions translates into omissions or non-tangible actions according to Torres Falcón:

*“We have to convince the functionaries that the violence is a transgression of human rights. Suddenly the human rights discourse is used in a way that is very, like, very light, without knowledge, without knowing exactly what we are talking about [...] the affirmative actions do not serve to fight discrimination and to prevent the violence.*

For human rights to permeate the public and private sphere, their utility and necessity must not only be established. The understanding of universal and inalienable rights must also be reproduced, where rights cannot be repealed and are not a subject of negotiation. According to Ortega:

*[...] in Mexico human rights have been less valued, as the matter of human rights is an abuse [...] ah, you have rights when you fulfill*

*your obligations, it is hard to understand that the rights do not have anything to do with obligations”*

This attitude towards human rights is also a result of political misuse, described by Contreras:

*“In Mexico, the matter of human rights was very devalued from the beginning. And for a big part of the population, to say human rights is to defend, like criminals, as it had been manipulated on a political level, that human rights defend criminals to get them out of prison”*

This experienced devaluation of human rights as described by the interviewees has further consequences for the recognition of women’s rights and femicidal violence as a violation. according to Torres Falcón. This is also accompanied by what Torres Falcón describes as “a patriarchal idea of blaming the victims”, namely:

*“What happens in cases of femicide, is that the authorities keep looking ‘in the lives of the women’, saying, she asked for it, she went out dancing, being a married woman she was alone at night at a party without a man to look after her. [...] and then women are placed outside of what is considered human. Then, the first step is to recognize women and recognize all of them [women] as human beings with rights [...] and when we recognize women as human beings with rights, then of course violence against her is a transgression of human rights, and there the mechanism becomes useful”.*

Hereby, with an devaluation of human rights, as experienced by the victims, the potential of the AVGM becomes restricted, as the rights of the individuals it aims to protect are not extensively recognized. When rights become a subject of negotiations, right holders can not entrust state or duty holders to respect and not discriminate against human rights. Moreover, processes of rights consciousness may be considered as enabled from two dimensions. One is enabling right holders to recognize and exercise their rights; citizen, legal and human rights. The other is forcing public officials, government bodies, institutions, and e.g legal agents to recognize and respect these rights. Not only in terms of *negative* actions, thus not violating

rights, but also very much in terms of *positive* actions, namely providing the necessary conditions for bolstering empowerment and resilience of right holders. Therefore, relying on a human rights consciousness to only emerge from right holders themselves, is very restricting. Women's rights must also in this case be further recognized and prioritized, as they tend to fall outside of the notion of human rights and the idea of the right holder to protect. Furthermore, as human rights seem undervalued and misused, women are even less able to exercise their rights than e.g men (taking into account extensive discrimination and violence).

#### 11.2.4 The gained experience by civil society

Proceeding from Engle Merry, in processes of rights and legal consciousness, experience and knowledge are gathered by individuals and grassroots organizations. Through these experiences, the 'emancipatory potential' is explored, as well as the expectations of the state in question are defined in terms of claims and demands. When the expectations are not fulfilled or at least not satisfactory, individuals might act upon kinship as with other allies, e.g grassroots, and civil society movements. Hereby, the claims are united with others claiming similar rights, and with struggles to make authorities and duty holders give accounts. This section, therefore, analyzes the *learned experience* of civil society in substituting deficient government actions in terms of femicidal violence, all in relation to AVGM. The analysis targets how this experience affects rights consciousness as a means for participation, and how this impacts the functioning of the mechanism.

On the note of learned experience, the first example is feminist and women's networks sharing their knowledge and experience with each other. These corporations not only strengthens other groups with similar demands but also contribute to awareness and use of AVGMs, according to Ortega:

*“This moment is when we started to work [with] these organizations. These organizations had other themes obviously more linked to the femicidal violence, and this is how we, I'm telling you, is how we got into the theme of the 'alerta', because we were not aware of the reality of the mechanism [...]”.*

On the notion of the gained experience, an example in this case study are the two petitioners from the first request. The National Observatory of Femicide (OCNF), enabled with its conjunction of numerous organizations (in 21 states), the sharing of experiences, knowledge, and litigation through experiences of accompanying cases and attempts of femicide. The second organization, Justicia Pro Persona is described by the interviewees as an organization with extensive experience and knowledge on human rights. According to Torres Falcón these type of organizations have been fundamental to strengthen human rights and the operational level of AVGM:

*“Well, they have something that we did not have years ago, now the organizations have this litigation experience, and more concretely of strategic litigation. So, we have as agents, civil society organizations that have experience, they are not only reporting. This is the next phase in the movement, where it is not only that this is happening and the state does not attend, now there’s a concrete experience to say, we were there, we were the audience, we talked to the judge, we talked to the victims and some have even brought it before the Inter American Court of Human Rights”*

These organizations have also contributed to making the issue of violence a priority and strengthened collaborations between victims, families, and civil society in the struggle to eliminate and sanction violence against women, according to Contreras:

*“[...] the organizations that are working on the theme, the same families of victims, that are driving reforms [...] the matter of the feminist movement [...] where they say we agree or not, where there has become a reality of ‘Ni Una Más’ [Not One More]”*

Hereby, the learned experience of civil society has helped to create awareness of the situation of femicidal violence. The sharing of experiences and knowledge has also helped enable the participation of more civil society agents and organizations, thus strengthening rights consciousness and participation. This has affected the functioning of the AVGM, as civil society, although limited by the established structure of the AVGM, is gaining experience

which is valuable not least with the operational level of the mechanism. It also strengthens right holders' access to the AVGM through the accompaniment of cases, as well as a sense of alliance and understanding of the structural causes of the cases. Instead of perceiving them as isolated events. In terms of human rights, the engagement of civil society also provides monitoring and transparency to government actions, also for the international human rights community as a whole.

#### 11.2.5 The perception of the mechanism - a disillusioned civil society

Proceeding from Engle Merry, the victim's participation and adoption of human rights frameworks is crucial for social reforms and for human rights activism. This last section analyzes this statement in relation to when expectations from right holders targeting duty holders translate into an experienced *disillusion* regarding measures to demand actions. This section analyzes how disillusion of civil society, victims, and families endangers processes of rights consciousness. Thereby constraining the participation of these agents in relation to the AVGM, thus impacting its functioning.

The mechanism has received extensive critique, some targeting its ineffectiveness regarding the reduction of rates of femicidal violence. According to Contreras, there is a sense of hopelessness in terms of the few advancements observed by victims and families:

*“The mechanism has contributed to advancement, but for the size of the problem, and in relation to the size of the efforts that are done, above all from the organizations, the advancement is small, where you have families of victims that are absolutely ‘knocked down’ [...]”*

Due to few advancements, and experiences of not being taken seriously, there is nowadays a tendency from civil society to dismiss the mechanism, according to Medina Rosas:

*“I mean, we should analyze the obstacles well because they are, this comes from the government but also from various civil society organizations, they say that the ‘alertas’ do not work. Well, the*

*mechanism is good but what is failing is who operates it and how they operate it”.*

This endangers the future of the AVGM as well as its symbolic and normative value. AVGMs risk being dismissed, instead of incorporating critique as well as necessary modifications to strengthen the way it operates. Unfortunately, this tendency is accompanied by institutions and governments, which early on wanted to dismiss the AVGMs as a means to silence the reality of high rates of violence, according to Contreras:

*“Look, I believe that there was an intention early on to ‘disappear them’ [AVGM]. For me, this is one risk that we were very aware of [...] with all these years of silence and after a lot of struggle the ‘alertas’ are used, with all the critiques that they received”.*

If the mechanism is dismissed, due to civil society not using AVGMs as a means of participation and accountability, actions against feminicidal violence may become centralized to government bodies, according to Medina Rosas:

*“I believe that the critiques, a lot of them, have had the intention to disregard a mechanism that is useful, that is important, and that also has the intention of the federal government to exercise control. If that is achieved, if the federal government centralizes everything, we will lose the mechanism. Because the mechanism is designed to be democratic and to be participatory”.*

Hereby, this disillusion of civil society endangers the use and utility of the mechanism. With so few advancements, a sense of hopelessness has emerged, which also is a result of the harm experienced by civil society and state omissions. However, the mechanism is fundamental to oblige actions against feminicidal violence. Thus, the AVGM should incorporate the critique and societal feedback to become more efficient and available for the petitioners. AVGM is also an important means for civil society to oblige government actions, and can be used to show where the governments and institutions are failing or not adequately addressing feminicidal violence. Without the mechanism, processes of rights consciousness, and

participation on behalf of civil society, victims and families may become even more restricted as they have fewer resources and access from within and outside to demand actions. If the mechanism becomes centralized it might also lose its participatory structure, thus making it less democratic and enabling fewer means of transparency and accountability.

## 12. Conclusions

To summarize, which conclusions may be drawn regarding the impact of rights consciousness and societal accountability on the functioning of the AVGM, drawing from the experience in the state of Ciudad de México?

The structure of the AVGM enables and sustains accountability, although as explored there are various obstacles regarding how this structure is upheld and respected by its users. Civil society through their role as petitioners contributes to the use and awareness of the AVGM, and furthermore provides the necessary evidence of a context of femicidal violence for it to be activated. What is found in this case study are the various obstacles when civil society, victims, and families access the AVGM, due to frustrating encounters with legal agents, institutional resistance as well the harm produced by the violence itself. As a consequence of gender stereotypes, prejudices, devaluation of women's rights, attempts to silence, the logic of simulation, political manipulation, lack of transparency, monitoring, and evaluations, the functioning of AVGM is weakened. The misuse of the mechanism and institutional resistance does also seem a result of patriarchal ideas permeating state institutions, also affecting the aim and reach of related political decisions. The AVGM is weakened as its main objective becomes distorted through governments and institutions displaying advancements, meanwhile not attending to the necessary matters. This distortion and neglect on behalf of public officials have contributed to a disillusioned civil society, where there are risks that civil society will start looking elsewhere for means to hold duty holders accountable. This places processes of accountability outside of an established structure, where societal accountability as explored in the study, offers a means to do so. There are although the dangers that these actions of societal accountability are discredited by duty holders, as they do not follow the logic of traditional systems of accountability. This also further requires an organized and intense voice of societal accountability, which as shown is not reliable regarding the extents of femicidal violence, harms to families and communities, as well as the dangers of making visible state omissions and violations of human rights.

Therefore, the AVGM is fundamental as a means of civil society to demand actions and transparency of governments and institutions. Although, it needs to incorporate societal feedback as well as to make necessary reformations to strengthen the participation of civil society, victims and families, as to strengthen stakeholder participation and rights consciousness. Finally, ensuring the participation of stakeholders may also contribute to the strengthening of human rights in bridging the distance between right holders and duty holders in Mexico.

### 13. Future Research

For future research, this study provides a good foundation. One aspect that should be further investigated is the importance and impact of civil society organizations, movements, and networks in addressing violence against women in Mexico, as a means to oblige state actions and visibilize violations and omissions. This study only briefly handles civil society organizations in terms of societal accountability, whereas there is much more to be mapped out. Also, the study briefly touched on the role of international agents in the functioning of the mechanism. This requires further research, as with how international agents may pressure governments to comply with human rights, at the same time as they are conditioned by diplomatic relations and matters of sovereignty. Meanwhile, they are important to recognize national and regional claims and provide a platform for rightsholder claims and exposures of state violations. Furthermore, the paradox with countries having ratified various human rights conventions, treaties, and protocols that continuously severely violate human rights, does also require further research.



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## Annex 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCHER AND STUDY

1. Introduction regarding researcher, aim of research, recorded session, anonymity, not obliged to stay throughout the whole season.

### INTRODUCTION OF INTERVIEWEE

1. Para comenzar con la entrevista, podrías primero dar una breve introducción de ti, de tus experiencias en este tema y tu rol profesional/académica actual?

### THEME 1: EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE AVGM, GETTING TO KNOW THE CONTEXT

1. ¿Conoces el mecanismo de Alerta de Género Contra Las Mujeres, y que experiencia tienes con ello?
2. Cómo es que no se declara ninguna alerta de género antes de 2015 tomando en cuenta que el mecanismo existe desde 2007?
3. ¿Cómo suele detenerse/pausarse una solicitud de alerta de género? (han habido numerosas solicitudes en curso/que siguen vigentes)
4. ¿Hubo casos (*casos emblemáticos*) en particular que tuvieron importancia y/o impacto para/en la instauración del mecanismo de AVGM?

### THEME 2: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND EXTERNAL FACTORS HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE AVGM

5. ¿En qué medida la presencia de ciertos políticos y funcionarios agiliza o dificulta la alerta?
6. ¿Qué tanto se ve coordinado el AVGM con otras iniciativas para prevenir y/o erradicar violencia feminicida en México?
7. ¿Una declaración de AVGM significa la adjudicación de mayores presupuestos?
8. El AVGM busca armonizar el nivel local, nacional e internacional en términos de DD.HH, ¿pero qué rol han tenido o tienen organismos internacionales?



### THEME 3: AVGM AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AVGM AND HARM AND ACCOUNTABILITY

9. En términos de derechos humanos, ¿por qué es importante que México tenga el mecanismo de AVGM?
10. Dentro del área de DH es fundamental entender y atacar el fenómeno del ‘daño’, es decir entender las consecuencias de la violación de DH que ha tenido lugar. Desde tu perspectiva cómo entenderías que este mecanismo contribuye a la comprensión de la violencia contra las mujeres como una violación de sus DH?
11. Una vez declarada la alerta de género en un territorio determinado, ¿cómo se lleva a cabo/entiende la rendición de cuentas (al cumplirse? con las acciones propuestas en la declaratoria, o al momento que se comete una violación grave de DD.HH vinculado con violencia de género)
12. El AVGM ha recibido mucha crítica (por realmente no prevenir ni erradicar la violencia feminicida al haberse sido declarado), ¿qué críticas son justas según usted?

## ANNEX 2: INTERVIEWEES

### ALEIDA HERNÁNDEZ CERVANTES

Aleida Hernandez Cervantes, a researcher at the interdisciplinary human rights center in Mexico, and moreover teaches at the law faculty for the law masters at the National University of Mexico (UNAM), since 2005. Her areas are law, social rights, gender, women's rights, feminism, and critical theories within law. She was invited three years ago to participate in the working group of both the first and later on the second request of the mechanism in Ciudad de México. She is also part of the current multidisciplinary and interinstitutional group that is responsible for monitoring the mechanism. She has been active and interested in women's rights and violence against women since a teenager, where she has been part of the foundation of a women's collective in the state of Sinaloa, still valid to this date.

### MARTA TORRES FALCÓN

Marta Torres Falcón, lawyer by profession, having worked as a litigant lawyer, principally within family law. In 1990 she started working at the first institutional center in Ciudad de México, CADIP, an assistance center for intrafamilial violence, at the same time as she researched domestic violence, violence in the home, and ever since she has been occupied on gender-based violence. She currently works at the Mexican Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM). She has participated in two requests of the mechanism, one in the state of Baja California, and later on the first request in the state of Ciudad de México.

### ANDRÉA MEDINA ROSAS

Andrea Medina Rosas is an independent feminist human rights lawyer (meaning that she does not represent any

institution). She has collaborated with civil organizations, collectives, and has various years of collaborating with the network 'red de Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez'. She also works extensively with training, to public and governmental functionaries, legal agents as well altogether within the area of human rights. She is not a litigant lawyer per se, yet she has accompanied a couple of cases the past 10 years. Her work, in general, is related to women's human rights, specifically women's right to a life free from violence, where she has many years experience in the field of disappearances and feminicides of women in Ciudad Juárez. She has participated extensively with the academic, researcher, and previous deputy (political party of PDR) Marcela Lagarde y de Los ríos, especially in the preparatory work of legislation LGAMVLV, as well as the diagnostic preparatory work of the legal typification of femicide in Mexico. In this collaboration, together with Lagarde y de Los ríos, they performed several dialogues between Mexico, Guatemala, and Spain. She has also collaborated in the evaluatory work to understand the impact of LGAMVLV, also in terms of changed normativity. Andrea Medina Rosas furthermore participated extensively in the 'Cotton Field' case, Gonzalez, Monreal and Monarrez v. Mexico, 2009.

#### PATRICIA ORTEGA

Patricia Ortega is an associate professor at the University of Guadalajara, in the department of health, especially in the area of psychology, and responsible for the psychology program. She has worked with sexual and reproductive rights since 2010 within the network of DDser (the national network on sexual and reproductive rights in Mexico), and specifically in the matter of safe abortion for women. She has participated in the working group established with the AVGM in Jalisco, valid since 2015. Following a second request on the activation of the alert on a federal level, she participated as a representative on behalf of the University of Guadalajara, which process is to the date prevailing.

#### XIPATL CONTRERAS

Anthropologist and currently a postgraduate in public health in the area of gender violence, with an emphasis on assistance to male perpetrators. She has for several years worked with women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights, feminicidal violence etcetera. She has experience working as an independent consultant, where she has collaborated with NGOs, UNWOMEN, various national and international institutions, one of these the National Observatory of Femicide (OCNF).

#### IRIS ROCÍO SANTILLÁN RAMÍREZ

Iris Rocío Santillan Ramirez, lawyer, feminist criminologist, and professor in juridico penal at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM-Azcapotzalco), furthermore specialized in violence against women with 20 years experience. She has two masters in law, one of these from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She also holds a doctor's degree in law. She has extensive labor experience, from among other lawyer's offices, where she has various years of experience of attending victims of gender-based violence. She has furthermore worked for the human rights commission in the state of Jalisco. Since 20 years back, she's dedicated to the academy, researching and teaching, and she's continuously given courses to public ministries as well as to the women's institute. She was one of the four academics in the first working process of the AVGM in Ciudad de México.

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